

THE GOVERNMENT OF ST. JOHN'S, NEWFOUNDLAND  
1888-1902

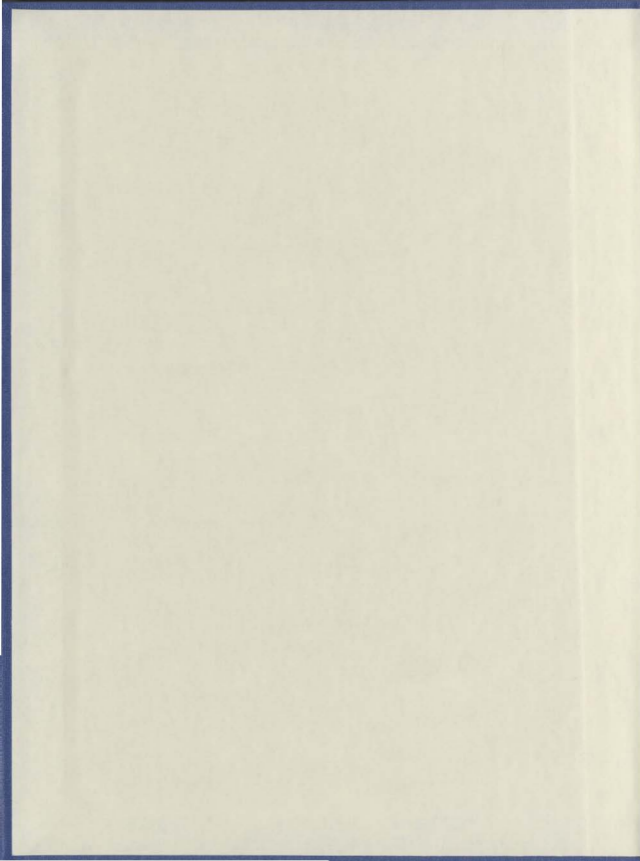
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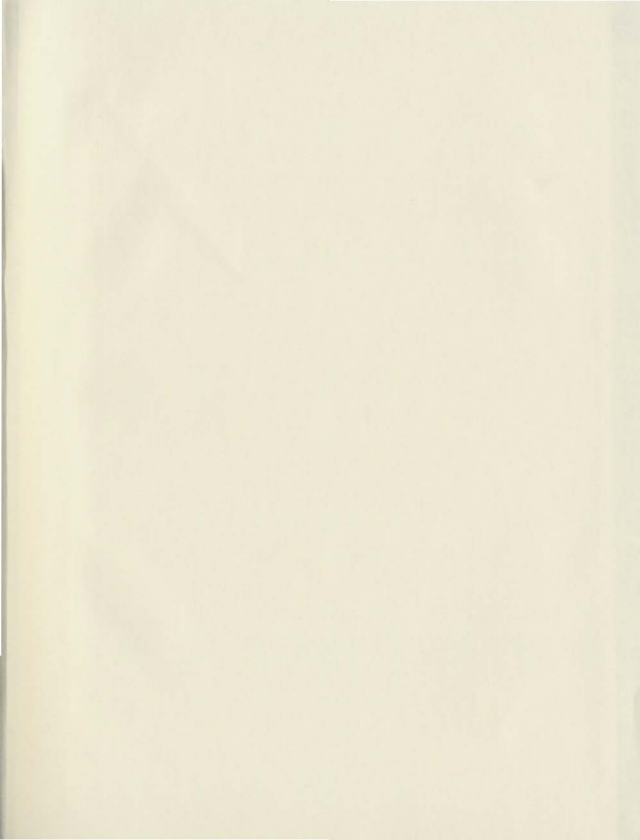
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THE GOVERNMENT OF ST. JOHN'S, NEWFOUNDLAND

1888-1902

by



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Submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of

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ABSTRACT

Newfoundland, in the nineteenth century, had a highly centralized political system which was best reflected in the municipal administration of its capital, St. John's. Until 1888, the colonial government had assumed direct responsibility for providing municipal services. In 1888, this form of municipal control was modified as St. John's received limited incorporation with the government still retaining responsibility for some services; it did not get full incorporation because the St. John's elite, which controlled the colonial government, was opposed to the establishment of a municipal council that would be elected by a majority of citizens. St. John's was thus given a Council that was partially responsible to both the government and the citizens.

This particular form of municipal control was, in general, unsuccessful, as successive councils throughout the 1890's were handicapped both by government interference and by insufficient revenue. The former was most obvious after the 1892 Fire when the Whiteway Government took away from the Council--which was controlled by its opponents--its rebuilding authority, while in 1898 the Winter Government removed the seven councillors from office and replaced them with three of their own supporters.

In both instances, these actions were politically motivated. Insufficient revenue was a serious impediment to Council's ability to provide adequate services, while at the same time paying the annual interest on a civic debt which was doubled by the Whiteyay Government after the 1892 Fire for rebuilding. This debt was in 1898 greatly reduced and an all-elective municipal system instituted in 1902, expressly to put the Council on a self-supporting basis and to free it from any direct political connection with the colonial government.

## PREFACE

While the literature on municipal government in Newfoundland is very limited,<sup>1</sup> that on St. John's and its urban history is almost non-existent.<sup>2</sup> Two exceptions are E.B. Foran's "St. John's City: Historic Capital" (1937), and John C. Crosbie's "Local Government in Newfoundland" (1956).<sup>3</sup> The former was a brief factual outline of the development of municipal institutions, whereas the latter was a discussion of the contemporary nature of local government in St. John's and Newfoundland in the 1950's. Its

<sup>1</sup>See D.W. Prowse, "Local Government in Newfoundland," University of Toronto Studies, History and Economics, II, (1907), pp. 77-84; H.B. Mayo, "Municipal Government in Newfoundland," Public Affairs (March, 1941), pp. 136-139; R.A. MacKay, (ed.), Newfoundland: Economic, Diplomatic, and Strategic Studies (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1946), pp. 150-156; C.W. Powell, "Problems arising from lack of Organized Municipalities in Newfoundland," Proceedings of the Institute of Public Administration of Canada (1949), pp. 168-182.

<sup>2</sup>The absence of any studies is best demonstrated by a recent bibliography on Canadian urban history which did not have a single entry for St. John's. Gilbert A. Stelter (comp.), Canadian Urban History: A Selected Bibliography (Sudbury: Laurentian University Press, 1972).

<sup>3</sup>Edward B. Foran, "St. John's City: Historical Capital of Newfoundland," in J.R. Smallwood, (ed.), The Book of Newfoundland, Vol. 2 (St. John's: Newfoundland Book Publishers Ltd., 1937), pp. 1-25; John C. Crosbie, "Local Government in Newfoundland," Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science, Vol. XXII, No. 3 (August, 1956), pp. 332-346.

historical background relied extensively upon Foran's article.

This thesis is an examination of the government of St. John's, its incorporation in 1888, and the vicissitudes of its early Councils. It is to be regretted that access was not granted to the relevant municipal records for the period under discussion, but it is to be hoped that future researchers will be able to do so. I would like to acknowledge the generous cooperation of the officials of the St. John's Municipal Council, the librarians in the Center for Newfoundland Studies, Memorial University, and the A.C. Hunter Library, Arts and Culture Center, and the staff of the Provincial Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador. Financial assistance was provided by Memorial University of Newfoundland. I would also like to acknowledge the help and encouragement of Professor D.G. Alexander and Professor J.K. Miller, my supervisor, for his criticisms and guidance.

ABBREVIATIONS

C.O. - Colonial Office Records.

JHA - Journal of the [Newfoundland] House of Assembly.

JLC - Journal of the [Newfoundland] Legislative Council.

MHA - Member of the House of Assembly.

MLC - Member of the Legislative Council.



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## CHAPTER I

### ST. JOHN'S AND ADMINISTRATION BEFORE 1888

St. John's with a population of about 31,100 in the early 1880's, was virtually the sole commercial, political and bureaucratic center in Newfoundland, and the headquarters for various religious and educational institutions. This dominance was the result of both the centralization of government and the establishment of most of the colony's mercantile firms. Both the colonial government and economy were controlled by a St. John's elite comprising approximately 1 per cent of the city's population. This elite--consisting of merchants, lawyers, doctors, senior civil servants and clerics--formed a closely knit community linked by both business connections and marriage.<sup>1</sup> Despite being the sixth largest city in British North America,<sup>2</sup> St. John's did not have a municipal council because its elite saw fit to retain control of municipal affairs within the colonial government.

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix B; also, K.J. Kerr, "A Social Analysis of the Members of the Newfoundland House of Assembly, Executive Council, and Legislative Council for 1855-1914" (unpublished M.A. thesis, Memorial University, 1973), pp. 279-286; G.M. Story, George Street United Church, 1873-1973 (George Street United Church, 1973), p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> Cities larger than St. John's were Montreal (140,747), Toronto (86,415), Quebec (62,446), Halifax (36,100), and Hamilton (35,961), Canada, Census of 1881, Vol. I, Table VI, p. 406.

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This is highly anomalous when compared to other cities of similar size and importance in Atlantic Canada. Saint John, Halifax, and Charlottetown, for instance, had had municipal corporations since 1785, 1841 and 1855 respectively.<sup>3</sup> St. John's, though, was administered by the colonial government and the General Water Company, a private utility. This form of municipal control was a feature peculiar to Newfoundland. Even Prince Edward Island, which also had a centralized municipal system, had its largest city incorporated with an elected mayor and councillors.<sup>4</sup> Newfoundland had no local government, as a result of the highly centralized administrative system created when Responsible Government was instituted in 1855.<sup>5</sup>

A Board of Works was established to administer all public buildings, property, and works. In St. John's this Board controlled the expenditure of all public funds, while in the outport districts authority was delegated to local road boards appointed by the Governor-in-Council.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> K.G. Crawford, Canadian Municipal Government (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1954), pp. 36-39.

<sup>4</sup> Frank MacKinnon, The Government of Prince Edward Island (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1951), pp. 274-286.

<sup>5</sup> S.J.R. Noel, Politics in Newfoundland (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), pp. 17-19.

<sup>6</sup> Consolidated Statutes, 1872, Title XVII, Cap. 39 and Title XXII, Cap. 75.

3

St. John's had no road boards because the Board of Works was able to manage directly the city's municipal services. This meant that the colonial government had some of the functions of a town council, preoccupied as it frequently was with the local affairs of both St. John's and the outports.<sup>7</sup> In the absence of local government, the MHA's acted as intermediaries between their constituents and the government, bringing to the latter's attention any issues affecting their constituents.<sup>8</sup> In addition, the Governor-in-Council appointed local denominational school boards. These were controlled by central boards of directors in St. John's, and dominated by city politicians.<sup>9</sup> The officers of both the road and school boards were generally supporters of the incumbent government, and included the local leadership--usually the merchant, magistrate, or clergyman--of the district.<sup>10</sup> This administrative system reinforced the dominance of St. John's and its politicians in colonial life, and militated against the establishment of popularly elected local councils. Outside

<sup>7</sup>C.W. Powell, "Problems Arising from Lack of Organized Municipalities in Newfoundland," p. 180.

<sup>8</sup>Noel, Politics in Newfoundland, p. 20.

<sup>9</sup>Prowse, "Local Government in Newfoundland," p. 82; Kerr, "A Social Analysis," pp. 279-282.

<sup>10</sup>J.K. Hillier, "A History of Newfoundland, 1874-1901" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Cambridge University, 1971), p. 4. This thesis is an excellent historical survey for the period 1874-1901.

St. John's, there was no municipal body formed until 1938.<sup>11</sup>

Despite the scarcity of literature on this subject, most writers agree that this retardation was caused by low incomes, fear of direct taxation, low education standards, and isolated communities connected only by sea.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, the typical outport household provided its own municipal services.

the Newfoundland village or hamlet was little more than a string of dwellings along the shore of some harbour, water was obtained from a shallow well or from a stream, and the ocean took care of sewerage disposal.<sup>13</sup>

Community affairs were often resolved informally and any decisions generally accepted by the people.<sup>14</sup> The colonial government, it seems was not anxious to establish local councils, because they could conceivably challenge its patronage and political power. The local leadership--in particular the merchant--was apparently reluctant because such councils would possibly reduce its political power and give control of local affairs to the fishermen.<sup>15</sup> Outport residents were,

<sup>11</sup> Powell, "Problems Arising from Lack of Organized Municipalities in Newfoundland," p. 169.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., pp. 169-182; Hiller, "A History," p. 20; Crosbie, "Local Government in Newfoundland," pp. 332-346; R.A. MacKay, Newfoundland, pp. 150-156.

<sup>13</sup> MacKay, (ed.), Newfoundland, p. 153.

<sup>14</sup> Hiller, "A History," p. 11.

<sup>15</sup> One of the larger outports, Harbour Grace, was commonly referred to as "Munnsborough," after the name of the leading mercantile family there. P.F. Neary, "Wabana, You're a Corker" (paper presented to the Canadian Historical Association, Kingston, June, 1973), p. 14.



however, mainly concerned with their immediate environs, and tended to leave colonial politics to St. John's politicians. Colonial politics thus became, as one historian noted, a "St. John's pastime, and its players used the bay as their occasional arena."<sup>16</sup> Preoccupied both with the patronage generated by the government and with political intrigue, these politicians were in general uninterested in attempts to foster local government.

The government directly administered the city through the Board of Works and the Surveyor General's Department, or by orders of the Governor-in-Council, and indirectly through the General Water Company. The Board of Works was responsible for the construction and maintenance of roads, and all sanitary matters, including drainage and sewerage. In 1879 this latter responsibility was transferred to a Sanitary Department, a separate division of the Board. The Surveyor General had authority to enforce the St. John's Rebuilding Act regarding street lines and plans, and the materials used in the construction of buildings.<sup>17</sup> The colonial government, moreover, could enact any miscellaneous regulations deemed

<sup>16</sup>Hiller, "A History," pp. 11, 22.

<sup>17</sup>Preliminary Consolidated Statutes, 1871, "Rebuilding of St. John's," pp. 643-660; and 51 Victoria, Cap. 5, "An Act to provide for the Management of the Municipal Affairs of the Town of St. John's, and for other Purposes." The 1871 Rebuilding Act was a consolidation of the 1846 Rebuilding Act and its amendments.

expedient to control nuisances in the city.<sup>18</sup>

The Water Company, formed in 1859 by prominent merchants, managed the water supply and the fire brigade. It replaced the St. John's Water Company, incorporated in 1846, because the latter did not have enough capital to secure a supply of water sufficient to meet the city's increasing needs.<sup>19</sup> The Company's stock was guaranteed by the colonial government, which had the right to appoint two of the three directors.<sup>20</sup> Many of the city's politicians and merchants were shareholders in this Company, including Robert Thorburn<sup>21</sup> who was the Company's President for several years until he became Premier in 1885. The Company was permitted to fix and levy a water rate, subject to the approval of the Governor-in-Council, on the owner and occupier of any property within three hundred yards of pipes laid by the Company.

<sup>18</sup>For example, see 31 Victoria, Cap. 4; "An Act to Amend and Consolidate the Laws relating to Nuisances and Dogs and to establish certain Municipal Regulations." Under this Act the colonial government could penalize people for "... improperly using sidewalks, depositing packages on sidewalks, . . . for neglecting to fence building lots . . . for throwing dung, etc., on gratings or before dwelling houses . . . for landlords for letting buildings for purposes of prostitution . . . ."

<sup>19</sup>22 Victoria, Cap. 7, "An Act to Incorporate the General Water Company"; E.B. Foran, "St. John's Historic Capital," p. 16.

<sup>20</sup>50 Victoria, Cap. 16, "An Act to Amend and Consolidate the Acts relating to the General Water Company."

<sup>21</sup>Robert Thorburn, 1836-1906: Merchant; MLC 1870-1885; MHA Trinity and Premier 1885-89; MLE 1893-1906.

This rate was imposed, first, on the rental value of this property and it was to be paid by the landlord; second, upon any insurable interest in this property, and the landlord, tenant, and occupying owner were all liable; and third, upon all occupants with an annual rental property value of forty dollars and over. The Company also received the duties on all coal imported into the city.<sup>22</sup>

City residents also paid indirect taxation under the 1863 Sewerage Act, which had authorized the Board of Works to construct a sewer and drainage system. A government loan of \$15,000 was raised, and 5 per cent debentures issued. These debentures were to be repaid in twenty-five years by an assessment on all property in St. John's. The interest on the debentures was paid, first, from the rents on crown lands in the city, and second, by an addition to the water rates.<sup>23</sup> This expenditure was the only substantial contribution the colonial government made to the improvement of the city.<sup>24</sup> Any further improvements awaited the establishment of municipal government in 1888.

St. John's was divided politically into two districts, St. John's East and West--each district electing three

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<sup>22</sup>50 Victoria, Cap. 16.

<sup>23</sup>26 Victoria, Cap. 6, "An Act to provide for the Sewerage of the Town of St. John's," printed in the Royal Gazette, March 31, 1863.

<sup>24</sup>W.V. Whiteway in Assembly Debates, April 20, 1885, in Terra Nova Advocate, June 27, 1885.

members of the House of Assembly. Although both districts included several nearby outports, they consisted overwhelmingly of the city's population.<sup>25</sup> That section of the city within the electoral boundaries of St. John's East was commonly referred to by its inhabitants as the 'East End', while that section in the western district was called the 'West End', with the former being demographically the larger of the two. Roman Catholics of Irish descent in the 1890's comprised two-thirds of the population, while the Anglicans and Methodists composed practically the remainder, with the Presbyterians--who formed a significant part of the business community--being just 3.3 per cent.<sup>26</sup> The West End was essentially a working-class district, whereas the East End included both working-class and professional people.<sup>27</sup> The latter contained, as one businessman commented, the "wealth, culture, and refinement of the city,"<sup>28</sup> since it had most of the city's churches, public buildings, schools, and was where most of the politicians and merchants lived.<sup>29</sup>

The ruling elite of late nineteenth century St. John's was a typical colonial Victorian society--"English in its

<sup>25</sup> Appendix A, Table 1.

<sup>26</sup> Appendix A, Tables 1 and 2.

<sup>27</sup> Appendix B.

<sup>28</sup> "What an American Thinks of Newfoundland and her People," a letter to Daily Colonist, September 11, 1889.

<sup>29</sup> Appendix B.

customs and conventions, and full of well-defined class distinctions."<sup>30</sup> Its members frequently travelled abroad to the United States, Canada, and England, and their newspapers closely followed the news of these countries. Limited coverage was, however, given to local events, because the dailies were political newspapers, concerned with character assassinations of rival politicians and with reporting news favourable to their respective parties. The newspapers were often so libellous the city's clergymen were at one time compelled to pass several resolutions--which were read in the churches--asking the editors to stop their degrading style because it counteracted the "teachings of church, school, and Christian home."<sup>31</sup> Apart from such social activities as "plays, operettas, bazaars, concerts, balls, moonlight toboggan parties . . ."<sup>32</sup> the favorite pastime of this elite was probably following the debates of the Assembly published daily in the newspapers when the Legislature was in session. Below this elite were the middle and working classes. The former consisted of clerks, civil servants, and skilled artisans, while the latter were

<sup>30</sup> A.N. Gosling, William G. Gosling: A Tribute (New York: The Guild Press, n.d.), p. 17.

<sup>31</sup> J.F. Morris Fawcett, "The Newspapers of Newfoundland," The Canadian Magazine, Vol. IV, No. 5 (March, 1895), p. 426.

<sup>32</sup> Lady Blake, "A Chat about Newfoundland," The North American Review, Vol. 152 (June, 1891), p. 722.

unorganized and poorly paid labourers employed in the fish exporting firms and secondary industries.<sup>33</sup>

St. John's in the 1880's was experiencing a building boom consequent upon the establishment of secondary manufacturing, the construction of a dry dock, and the commencement of construction for a trans-island railway originating at St. John's. Much of the city's physical expansion was best reflected in the number of new houses annually being built, with as many as 180 by 1885.<sup>34</sup> Many of these houses were built by people moving to the city's outskirts--that area above the hill overlooking the harbour--from the more congested areas where fires were quite frequent.<sup>35</sup> Besides these homes, many public buildings, churches, schools, and private residences were constructed.<sup>36</sup> St. John's, however, did not have sufficient municipal services for either its present or future demands. Indeed, it had very few services. One political figure closely identified with the Municipal Council from its inception reflected in 1907 that:

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<sup>33</sup> See Bill Gillespie, "Central Labour Organizations in Newfoundland and the emergence of the Newfoundland Federation of Labour" (History 689A Paper, Memorial University, 1975) for an historical discussion of the development of the St. John's Labour movement.

<sup>34</sup> Newfoundlander, January 20, 1882; "St. John's Past and Present," Daily Colonist; Christmas Number, 1887, p. 15.

<sup>35</sup> Foran, "St. John's: Historic Capital," p. 13.

<sup>36</sup> "St. John's - Past and Present" (1887), p. 15.

... in 1888 we had but a limited sewerage system, the most important of all civic services; ... no sidewalks on our principal streets; ... a limited supply of water; a Fire Department that went to pieces the first time it had to grapple with a serious conflagration; no parks or gardens, which in other cities are the lungs of the people; no light, save a few old-fashioned gas lamps that tended to illuminate the darkness; ... no street car service; no telephone service and no pavement on our principal streets.<sup>37</sup>

The colonial government had proved unwilling to provide the necessary funds for these needed services. Dependent upon the outports for political support, the Conservative Party, which had held office for all except four years since the early 1860's, was reluctant because the rest of the colony objected.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, the government had, by 1881, committed itself to the expensive undertaking of constructing a railway, and probably believed that the colony, with its limited finances and resources besides the fishery,<sup>39</sup> could not

<sup>37</sup> E.P. Morris, "The Growth of Municipal Government in St. John's," The Newfoundland Quarterly (July, 1907), p. 6.

<sup>38</sup> See for example, Rorke and Dawe in Assembly Debates, February 17, 1879, in Public Ledger, February 24, 1879; Assembly Debates, March 5, 1880, in Public Ledger, March 11, 1880; Whiteway in Assembly Debates, April 9, 1883, in Evening Mercury, April 11, 1883; Terra Nova Advocate, September 5, 1882; Harbour Grace Standard, February 19, 1887; January 14, April 21, 1888; Weekly Record, September 8, 1888.

<sup>39</sup> An excellent analysis of the late nineteenth century Newfoundland economy is D.G. Alexander, "A New Newfoundland: The Traditional Economy and Development to 1934" (paper presented to the Canadian Historical Association, Kingston, June, 1973).

then afford any substantial municipal improvements. Finally, the people of St. John's were opposed to taxation<sup>40</sup> in general, even if the extra expenditure meant improved services. This reluctance to taxation was well demonstrated by their reaction to the government's proposal for an extended sewerage system in 1879-81.

The existing system was badly constructed, of very poor quality, and did not service the whole town.<sup>41</sup>

... many thickly populated sections of the town are almost altogether without sewers; some even without surface drains. The stench which arises of a summer's night from any of the chief thoroughfares is very offensive to the scent, and must be detrimental to the health. The surfaces of many of the minor streets are too frequently covered with garbage, and some are made the receptacle for the emptyings from the houses on either side of them. The danger to which the whole people of this city would be exposed in time of pestilence in consequent of bad sanitary arrangements is fearfully apparent and admitted by all thinking persons.<sup>42</sup>

There were frequent petitions to the Assembly requesting remedial action.<sup>43</sup> In 1879, a joint committee of the

<sup>40</sup> Gertrude B. Gunn, The Political History of Newfoundland, 1832-1864 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966), p. 143; Noel, Politics in Newfoundland, p. 18; Maurice Fenelon in Assembly Debates, February 18, 1879, in Public Ledger, February 25, 1879; and Newfoundlander, October 2, 1883.

<sup>41</sup> Moses Harvey to Morning Chronicle, February 18, 1879, in P6/A/17, Moses Harvey Scrapbooks, 1878-1881, n.p. (located at the Newfoundland Archives).

<sup>42</sup> Evening Mercury, April 22, 1885.

<sup>43</sup> See for example: Newfoundland, Journal of the House of Assembly, for April 11, 20, 1870; February 22, 28, March 6, 1872; and April 5, 1878.



Legislative Council and the Assembly was appointed to consider the city's sanitary condition. In its report, the committee suggested both that a Sanitary Department be established<sup>44</sup> within the Board of Works, and that the government hire an engineer to survey the city's sewer needs.<sup>45</sup> The government accepted these recommendations and a London engineering firm was employed. The firm devised three alternative systems,<sup>46</sup> but the government took no action. There appear to be two reasons for this decision. First, the outport MHA's and their constituents were opposed to the provision of a sewerage system out of general revenue.<sup>47</sup> Second, the colonial government considered that the city property owners (i.e., themselves) could not afford the increased municipal taxation which would inevitably follow the undertaking of such an expensive system.<sup>48</sup> Many large

<sup>44</sup> 50 Victoria, Cap. 6, "An Act respecting the Sanitary Improvements of the Town of St. John's, and for other purposes."

<sup>45</sup> Report of the Joint Committee of the Council and the Assembly appointed to report upon the sanitary conditions of St. John's, in JHA, 1879, March 27, 1879.

<sup>46</sup> Assembly Debates February 26, 1880, in Public Ledger, February 28, 1880; see also: "Report of Messrs. Kinnipie and Morris on the proposed scheme of sewerage for the Town of St. John's, Newfoundland," in JHA, 1880, Appendix, pp. 424-438.

<sup>47</sup> Terra Nova Advocate, September 5, 1882.

<sup>48</sup> Whiteway in Assembly Debates April 20, 1885, in Terra Nova Advocate, June 27, 1885.

property owners hoped that the Sanitary Department would be able to eliminate the most flagrant sanitary abuses in the city and hence winnow the need for heavy expenditures.<sup>49</sup>

The Department had an added, and most welcome, advantage in that it could operate without the imposition of extra taxation. Instead, the annual sewerage rates raised by the Water Company under the 1863 Sewerage Act were appropriated for this purpose, augmented by small annual subsidies from general revenue.<sup>50</sup>

Adverse reaction to taxation had been a reason why previous discussions of incorporation failed.<sup>51</sup> The St. John's elite, like their outport counterpart, feared relinquishing control of local affairs to an independent municipal body elected by the middle and working classes who might levy "unfair and unjust" taxation on their property.<sup>52</sup> Most businessmen, like their counterparts in Canadian and American cities,<sup>53</sup> regarded the administration of municipal affairs

<sup>49</sup> See for example, A. Harvey in Legislative Council Debates February 20, 1886, in Evening Telegram, February 27, 1886.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., April 15, 1879, in Newfoundlander, April 18, 1879.

<sup>51</sup> See JHA, March 13, 1833; March 22, 1834; February 12, 1836; July 23, August 20, 1840.

<sup>52</sup> Daily Colonist, March 13, 1886; and letters to Evening Telegram, November 8, 1886, and Evening Mercury, May 21, 1887.

<sup>53</sup> See: Samuel P. Hays, "The Politics of Reform in Municipal Government in the Progressive Era," in B.A. Brownell

as if it were simply another business--a "joint-stock affair" concerned solely with how to "get the most value for the money."<sup>54</sup> from the services being provided. Many of them--aware of the graft and corruption commonly associated with elected municipal governments in Canada and the United States--believed that the principles of taxation with democratic control were a myth and a fallacy since "by the elective system . . . people do not always elect the best men . . ." <sup>55</sup> Particularly through the Legislative Council, which was composed of the colony's largest property owners, the Water Street merchants who "had the greatest stake in the city and interest in civic management"<sup>56</sup> jealously guarded any legislation affecting St. John's.

By the 1880's, some change in the municipal system was obviously needed if St. John's were to have improved municipal services. What particular form new municipal

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and W.E. Stickler, Bosses and Reformers: Urban Politics in America, 1880-1920 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1973); pp. 137-159; and Paul Rutherford (ed.), Saving the Canadian City (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974) for attitudes of American and Canadian businessmen towards municipal government.

<sup>54</sup> Thorburn and Winter in Assembly Debates, March 11, 1886, and May 6, 1887 in Evening Mercury, March 15, 1886 and May 11, 1887 respectively.

<sup>55</sup> Winter in Assembly Debates, May 6, 1887; in Evening Mercury, May 11, 1887.

<sup>56</sup> Colonial Secretary Robinson in Legislative Council Debates, March 29, 1898; in Daily News, April 26, 1898.

institutions would take depended both on the ability of the elite to agree upon a suitable system, independent of any partisan political considerations, and on the concessions it was willing to make to the middle class, which tended to favour full incorporation.

## CHAPTER II

### THE INCORPORATION OF ST. JOHN'S, 1885-1888

The 1888 Municipal Act gave St. John's a council wherein five members were to be elected by the rate-payers and two appointed by the colonial government, one of whom would be the council's chairman for the first year of its operation. Although some rate-payers wanted the council to have complete autonomy from the colonial government, it was not given such freedom because the government, whose supporters were some of the colony's leading merchants, was cautious. The nature of the Act reflected the fact that most townsmen were apathetic, while the local politicians and those citizens actively involved in securing incorporation, regarded it as a suitable temporary compromise between the several conflicting economic and political groups in the city. Incorporation was established under the aegis of the colonial government because the government wanted the citizens of St. John's to provide and pay for their own services. But this incorporation was, however, subject to the vicissitudes and intrigue of Newfoundland politics.

The denomination of its members had been the only difference in the period 1873-1882 between the two political parties. The ruling government party, the Conservatives, consisted mainly of Protestants while the opposition Liberals

were mainly Roman Catholics. The 1882 general election, however, divided politics upon economic and class issues instead of religion. In this election the Liberals supported the Conservative Whiteway Government in its advocacy of a trans-island railway that would open up the supposed riches of the interior and thus lessen the economy's total dependency on the fishery and improve the standard of living. The opponents of the railway--the New Party--were mainly Protestant Water Street merchants who, while not entirely against a railway, believed that it should only be built at a pace which the economy and fishery could afford. The electorate overwhelmingly endorsed Whiteway's<sup>1</sup> "policy of Progress," probably hoping that it would alleviate the pressures of unemployment in the island and offset the dire effects of several unsuccessful fishery seasons. Although defeated in the election, the New Party politicians intensified their opposition to the railway, which they considered synonymous with Whiteway's political existence. Therefore, they began preparing for the next general election and planned to use a very successful Newfoundland election ploy--the sectarian cry--to defeat Whiteway. Aided by the

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<sup>1</sup>William Valance Whiteway: Lawyer; MHA Twillingate-Fogo, 1859-1869; Speaker of the House of Assembly, 1865-1869; defeated as d. Confederate, 1869; MHA Trinity, 1873-1885, 1889-1894; MHA Harbour Grace, 1895-1897; Solicitor General, 1874-1878; Premier and Attorney General, 1878-1885, 1889-1894, 1895-1897.

sectarian animosity aroused by a violent clash in December of 1883 between Catholics and Protestants in Harbour Grace, the New Party politicians managed to have the 1885 Throne Speech so amended as to place responsibility for the 'Harbour Grace Affray' on the Catholics. The Liberals immediately withdrew their support for Whiteway, thus leaving him with a minority government for the rest of the session. Three political parties, therefore, initially contested the general election held later in the same year. The Protestant politicians were divided between those who supported the Reform Party (formerly the New Party but now renamed), and those who still loyally followed Whiteway. The Liberals formed the third party. Promised a Chief Justiceship by the Reform Party politicians, Whiteway retired from politics to be succeeded by Robert Thorburn, a prominent merchant, thus making it possible for most Protestant politicians to present a unified front to the electorate in view of the sectarian feeling. These politicians appealed to their constituents with a platform of "No Amalgamation with the Catholics," but coincidentally intimated to senior Catholic politicians that amalgamation with the Liberals would be possible, and even desirable after the election. The Reform Party expectedly won the election, winning all Protestant seats except one which went to a Whiteway supporter dissatisfied with the union of the two Protestant parties. The Liberals won all Catholic seats, except one, in St. John's West which elected

an independent.<sup>2</sup>

The Thorburn Government declared that one of its first priorities would be to establish the exact financial condition of the colony before incurring any new additions to the general public debt.<sup>3</sup> This caution, nevertheless, had to be abandoned when the long-expected amalgamation between Catholics and the Reform Party took place in July, 1886.<sup>4</sup> W.J.S. Donnelly<sup>5</sup> was made Receiver-General, while Maurice Fenelon<sup>6</sup> became Colonial Secretary. Widespread economic distress, both in St. John's and in the outports, dictated that the government embark upon the large-scale public works being demanded by the Liberals to alleviate unemployment created by the stoppage of work on railway construction, resulting from the bankruptcy in 1884 of the company the

<sup>2</sup>This paragraph paraphrases the historical account of Newfoundland politics of the 1870's and 1880's in J.K. Hiller, "The Railway and Local Politics in Newfoundland, 1870-1901" (paper presented to the Atlantic Canada Studies Conference, 1974), pp. 1-18.

<sup>3</sup>Evening Mercury, February 10, 1886.

<sup>4</sup>Hiller, "A History," pp. 128-129.

<sup>5</sup>W.J.S. Donnelly, 18---1914: MHA, Placentia, 1878-1879; Receiver General, 1882-1889.

<sup>6</sup>Maurice Fenelon, 1847-1897: educator; MHA, St. John's West, 1873-1878; Catholic School Inspector, 1878-1886; Legislative Councillor and Colonial Secretary, 1886-1889; Legislative Councillor, 1893-1897.



Whiteaway Government had contracted to build it.<sup>7</sup> The construction of a railway to Placentia,<sup>8</sup> and a promise to spend at least \$100,000 on a sewerage system in St. John's were part of the price the Reformers had to pay for amalgamation.<sup>9</sup> These large public works would provide employment, especially for the large number of the Catholic unemployed in Placentia and St. John's.<sup>10</sup> In addition, it was designed to stop the increasing flow of emigration from Newfoundland to the American continent.<sup>11</sup> The procurement of these public works was probably essential to the political survival of the Liberal Party in St. John's. Dominated by St. John's politicians who had entered politics in the 1860's and 1870's, the Party was rapidly losing its hold on the

<sup>7</sup> Hiller, "A History," pp. 101-106, 131; see also: Alexander, "A New Newfoundland," pp. 23-30, for an analysis of the Newfoundland economy in the 1880's.

<sup>8</sup> Hiller, "A History," pp. 131-132.

<sup>9</sup> Daily Colonist, July 20, September 4, 1886; and A.B. Morine and T.J. Murphy in Assembly Debates, February 28, 1887, in Evening Mercury, March 4, 5, 1887.

<sup>10</sup> E.P. Morris in Assembly Debates, February 25, 1887, in Evening Mercury, February 28, 1887. Many unemployed men from the Catholic outport districts went to St. John's in search of work. This influx, however, only aggravated the chronic unemployment situation in St. John's where there had been several labour demonstrations by the unemployed demanding "work or bread." In one incident the House of Assembly was invaded by labourers demanding railway work. See: H.M. Mosdell, When Was That? (St. John's: Newfoundland Government Reprint, 1974), pp. 4-5; Daily Colonist, March 31, 1886.

<sup>11</sup> Alexander, "A New Newfoundland," pp. 25, 29.

urban working class because the interests of the established power structure were no longer necessarily the same as those of Catholic workers: Very obvious challenges to that leadership were the elections of young Catholic populists, particularly after the 1885 general election. The election of E.P. Morris,<sup>12</sup> an independent in 1885--polling the largest vote of any of the Liberal candidates--for instance, represented the victory of a younger generation of Catholic politicians<sup>13</sup> whose political support depended on their close association with the popular issues of the day and not upon the sanction of the Catholic Church nor the endorsement of senior Catholic politicians who controlled such Church-affiliated organizations as the Benevolent Irish Society and the Mechanics Society.<sup>14</sup> Although several prominent Catholic

<sup>12</sup>E.P. Morris, 1858-1935: Lawyer; MHA St. John's West, 1885-1917; Executive Councillor without portfolio, 1889-1894, 1895-1897, 1900-1902; Minister of Justice, 1902-1907; Premier, 1909-1917. See: J.P. Greene, "Edward Patrick Morris, 1886-1900" (History 499 paper, Memorial University, 1968); P.F. Neary and S.R.J. Noel, "Continuity and Change in Newfoundland Politics" (paper presented to the Canadian Political Science Association, St. John's, June, 1971), pp. 21-22; and Noel, *Politics in Newfoundland*, pp. 32-33, for historical accounts of Morris's political career.

<sup>13</sup>Evening Telegram, October 21, 1885.

<sup>14</sup>Morris, for instance, was very prominent in the land tenure movement in the mid-1880's, and in the promotion of local industries, through the Home Industries Society, Terra Nova Advocate, February 21, 1885, and Daily Colonist, October 12, 1886.

politicians had joined the Thorburn Government, the Liberals, under the leadership of P.J. Scott,<sup>15</sup> remained a separate party, not offering any effective opposition.<sup>16</sup> The government's tenure of office lasted until 1889 during which time the public debt had been increased by over \$2 million, much of which was spent on public works.<sup>17</sup>

Incorporation was always in the foreground during the 1880's as a possible solution to the need for civic improvements. Its strongest advocates were supporters of the Liberal Party from the Catholic middle class, many of whom were shopkeepers and builders.<sup>18</sup> This attitude was not generally held by most citizens who hoped the government would be able to give the city additional municipal services without increasing taxation.

Despite paying sewerage rates, many people in St. John's were not serviced by the existing sewer and drainage system, and petitioned the government to provide an extended sewerage system.<sup>19</sup> In 1885, the Whiteway Government

<sup>15</sup>Patrick J. Scott, 1848-1899; Lawyer; MHA St. John's West, 1873-1889, 1894-1897; Receiver General, 1894-1897.

<sup>16</sup>The Times (St. John's), January 14, February 4, 29, March 3, 1888.

<sup>17</sup>Hiller, "Railway and Local Politics," p. 16.

<sup>18</sup>See Terra Nova Advocate, September 5, 1882, January 20, 1883.

<sup>19</sup>Whiteway in Assembly Debates, April 20, 1885, in Terra Nova Advocate, June 27, 1885. Also, JHA, 1883,

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(1878-1885) introduced a sewerage bill late in the session.<sup>20</sup> Whiteway outlined the three purposes of the bill. First, the government was responding to the numerous petitions from citizens who protested inadequate municipal services. Second, the debentures raised under the 1863 Sewerage Act were due in 1888 and the government proposed to pay off that loan by the borrowing of another loan. Third, a debt of \$15,000 had accumulated in the Sanitary Department since 1879 for cleaning the town and the government wanted to rid itself of this expense, which was annually increasing.<sup>21</sup> Whiteway's bill would not have incorporated the city; instead it would have given St. John's an improved sewerage system and centralized the municipal responsibilities of the Board of Works and the Water Company in one Municipal Board. This Board was to consist of three government appointees and two members, elected by city residents on a household franchise--the same as that for MHA's. ... Whiteway said that the government had to have a majority on this Board because it would both raise the loan and guarantee

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p. 185; 1884, pp. 84, 85; 1885, pp. 69, 104, 107, for petitions from St. John's residents asking for an improved sewerage system.

<sup>20</sup> JHA, 1885, April 15, 16, 20 and 23.

<sup>21</sup> Whiteway in Assembly Debates, April 20, 1885, in Terra Nova Advocate, June 27, 1885.

the interest payments.<sup>22</sup> Another reason for this majority was to protect the rights of the city's large property owners who would have to pay much of the local taxation.<sup>23</sup> He explained that he had "endeavoured by this bill to devise what may not be inaptly termed a hybrid system having the advantages without the drawbacks of an incorporation." Whiteway felt, however, that the two elected members--one from each end of the city--on the Board would give it a "popular flavour" by representing the whole city.<sup>24</sup>

Although the bill did not receive much opposition either in or outside the Assembly, Whiteway withdrew the bill after its second reading because of the opposition of some of the St. John's MHA's and because of the lateness of the session.<sup>25</sup> Whatever Whiteway's ulterior motive might have been--it was suggested by his political opponents that he was trying to gain the support of the Liberal Party--<sup>26</sup> the sewerage bill did indicate that the colonial government was eager to divest itself of direct financial responsibility

<sup>22</sup> ibid. The bill was printed in Evening Telegram, April 20, 1885.

<sup>23</sup> Evening Mercury, April 22, 1885.

<sup>24</sup> Whiteway in Assembly Debates, April 20, 1885, in Terra Nova Advocate, June 27, 1885.

<sup>25</sup> Evening Telegram, Evening Mercury, April 24, 1885.

<sup>26</sup> Evening Telegram, April 21, 1885.

for the city's administration and had decided that the inhabitants must provide for the city's growing municipal needs.

Incorporation was not an issue in the 1885 general election in the two St. John's districts, and none of the candidates advocated this policy. Nevertheless, the need for municipal improvements, including a sewerage system, was recognized by all candidates as the major concern of the electorate and they all promised to secure these improvements.<sup>27</sup> The candidates preferred representation by St. John's MHA's on the Board of Works, and hence government patronage to a municipal corporation. One candidate for St. John's West (E.P. Morris), for instance, maintained that the city's municipal affairs would be more efficient if the Board's operations were "reconstituted" so that:

... as far as the expenditure of money in St. John's is concerned, each representative of the city would be ex officio a member of the Board of Works without salary, but with power to vote on all expenditures in his district . . . .

Morris believed that this "reconstitution" would have a

<sup>27</sup> See Evening Telegram, 1885, for the manifestos of the following candidates: the Liberal Party's candidates for St. John's East (Ambrose Shea, R.J. Kent, M.J. O'Mara), and for St. John's West (P.J. Scott, J.J. Callanan and J.J. Furlong); see September 24, and 21 respectively; for the manifesto of E.P. Morris, an independent for St. John's West, see September 16; and for that of the two Whitewayite candidates in St. John's East, J.J. Dearin and R.J. Parsons, see September 26 and October 3, respectively.

"salutary effect" upon the city's municipal affairs.<sup>28</sup>  
 Although the St. John's candidates did not raise the issue of incorporation, their outport counterparts apparently did, demanding that the city should pay for its own improvements.<sup>29</sup>

The Thorburn Government which succeeded Whiteway in the 1885 general election, continued Whiteway's policy of attempting to separate the local affairs of St. John's from the general administration of the colony. Similarly, the government in 1886 advocated a form of local government that would be effectively controlled by the Executive, while the inhabitants would be liable for expenditures incurred. Like its predecessor, this government of "sound commercial principles"<sup>30</sup> regarded the protection of property as fundamentally important in the framing of any municipal franchise.

The government introduced a sewerage bill in the 1886 session which was essentially the same as that of 1885.<sup>31</sup> The chief objection of the Liberals to this bill was the

<sup>28</sup> "Manifesto of E.P. Morris to the voters of St. John's West," in Evening Telegram, September 16, 1885.

<sup>29</sup> A.B. Morine in Assembly Debates, February 23, 1888, in Evening Mercury, March 15, 1888.

<sup>30</sup> D.W. Prowse, A History of Newfoundland, Canadiana Reprint Series No. 33 (Belleville: Mika Studio, 1972), p. 514.

<sup>31</sup> Thorburn in Assembly Debates, March 11, 1886, in Evening Mercury, March 15, 1886.

provision permitting majority government representation on the proposed municipal board, since it would mean continued governmental control of municipal affairs. W.J.S. Donnelly, a senior Liberal, argued that the rate-payers would have only " . . . a fictitious delusive representation; that their two members are helpless when opposed, as they will be, by the three members nominated by the Executive . . . ."<sup>32</sup> E.P. Morris, an independent, similarly opposed the bill, noting it was a "hybrid affair, . . . or a sort of a hobbled-déshy legislation." He was in particular fearful that the municipal board would reduce the MHA's influence in the city's affairs, and preferred, if the city was not to be fully incorporated, that it continue to be administered by a reorganized Board of Works having two or three city MHA's as its members.<sup>33</sup>

The Liberal opposition, nonetheless, supported the bill's second reading, which was then referred to a select committee consisting of both government and Liberal representatives.<sup>34</sup> The committee reported that the bill not be

<sup>32</sup> W.J.S. Donnelly in Assembly Debates, March 11, 1886, in Evening Mercury, March 15, 1886.

<sup>33</sup> E.P. Morris in Assembly Debates, March 11, 1886, in Evening Mercury, March 15, 1886.

<sup>34</sup> Assembly Debates, March 11, 1886, in Evening Mercury, March 15, 1886. This committee consisted of Thorburn, Winter, A.F. Goodridge, and J.E.P. Peters for the government and Donnelly, Scott (St. John's West) and R.J. Kent (St. John's East) for the Liberal Party.



adopted during that session because there was insufficient information as to the probable cost of a sewerage system, and because it wanted more time to consider several of the bill's provisions. The committee, therefore, recommended that it be given authority to continue its deliberations after the end of the session and to report to the House at the next session. Nevertheless, the committee did propose a temporary measure permitting a committee of the Assembly to expend certain funds to start the construction of a new sewerage system. This bill, drafted by representatives from both the government and the Opposition, apparently received no opposition in the Assembly<sup>35</sup> since it would help relieve the chronic unemployment in St. John's.

Because the sewerage bill was presented to the Legislative Council the day before the Legislature was to be prorogued, the councillors refused to pass it, claiming they would not have had sufficient time to consider its full implications. They unanimously condemned the Assembly for not including any councillors on the committee to represent the large property owners in deciding how the money would be spent.<sup>36</sup>

The government immediately reacted to the defeat of its sewerage bill by passing a series of resolutions

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<sup>35</sup> JHA, May 13, 14, 15, 1886.

<sup>36</sup> Legislative Council Debates, May 18, 1886, in Evening Telegram, June 7, 8, 1886.

authorizing the select committee to continue its deliberations after the end of the 1886 session and to report to the House at the following session.<sup>37</sup> The committee was empowered to have surveys, plans, and estimates made for a sewerage system and, as soon as it could, to buy the necessary pipes and commence with the actual physical work. Moreover, the committee could enter into any contracts and agreements that seemed expedient, with the committee's expenditures being underwritten by the Assembly.<sup>38</sup> The government, by adopting these resolutions, was not ignoring the rights of the city's property owners--many government members as Thorburn and A.F. Goodridge<sup>39</sup> were prominent merchants--but attempting to use the committee politically.

The government persisted in having the committee appointed because the commencement and promise to spend at least \$100,000 on a sewerage system was one of the terms of amalgamation between the Reform and Liberal parties. This \$100,000 was agreed to be spent in 1886, but none was.<sup>40</sup> Instead, the select committee, then, had been used to help

<sup>37</sup> JHA, May 18, 1886.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> F. Goodridge, 1839-1920; Merchant; MHA Ferryland, 1880-1885; Twillingate, 1885-1889, 1893-1900; Premier, April-December, 1894.

<sup>40</sup> Daily Colonist; August 31, September 11, 1886; The Times, January 19, 1887.

secure Liberal support for an amalgamated government, and the \$100,000 probably spent, as the Whitewayite Times suggested, ". . . to float the scuttled policy of the Amalgamated Government . . . by spending it on the Placentia railway."<sup>41</sup>

A by-election was held in St. John's East in November, 1886, resulting from the resignation of R.J. Kent,<sup>42</sup> a prominent Liberal, in July. The major issues of the election campaign were the popularity of the amalgamation and the perennial problem of how to provide an improved sewerage system for St. John's. This by-election was considered very important for the amalgamated government because the election of its candidate, J.L. Flannery, would mean its public acceptance. Senior Catholic politicians, such as Ambrose Shea,<sup>43</sup> campaigned actively for Flannery and against T.J. Murphy,<sup>44</sup> the victorious Whiteway supporter.<sup>45</sup> Murphy, who had the

<sup>41</sup> The Times, January 19, 1897.

<sup>42</sup> R.J. Kent to Governor DesVoeux, July 12, 1886, in GN/1, Governor's Office, Miscellaneous Papers and Correspondence, 1886-1887 (located at the Newfoundland Archives).

<sup>43</sup> Ambrose Shea, 1817-1905: Merchant; MHA Placentia-St. Mary's, 1848-1855; St. John's West, 1855-1859; Burin, 1859-1861; Placentia-St. Mary's, 1861-1869; Harbour Grace, 1874-1885; St. John's East, 1885-1887; Speaker, 1855-1861; Executive Council, 1865-1869; Governor, Bahamas, 1887-1895.

<sup>44</sup> Thomas J. Murphy, 1861- : Lawyer; MHA St. John's East, 1886-1894.

<sup>45</sup> Murphy in Assembly Debates, February 22, 1887, in Evening Telegram, February 25, 1887.

support of both the working class and the Home Industries Society--an organization formed by local manufacturers in mid-October to agitate for a protective tariff for local industry--<sup>46</sup> promised to do his utmost in the forthcoming 1887 session to get full incorporation for St. John's.<sup>47</sup>

The select committee reported to the Assembly on March 4, 1887, that it had collected all the necessary information for the proposed sewerage system and that it had already imported a considerable quantity of the pipes required.<sup>48</sup> Its report was accepted and a joint committee of both the Legislative Council and the Assembly was appointed on March 15 to draft an incorporation bill including provisions for a sewerage system.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>46</sup> See Daily Colonist, October 12, 19, 1886. Organizers of the Society included Thomas Mitchell (baker), Jeremiah Halleran (builder), E.P. Morris (lawyer), P.R. Bowers (editor, Daily Colonist), John B. Ayre (biscuit baker and confectioner), James Angel (engineer and machinist), A.B. Morine (lawyer), Henry Gear (hardware merchant), James T. Parker (boot and shoe manufacturer), W.S. McGrath (saddler and harness maker), and R. McCoubrey (Times newspaper).

<sup>47</sup> Daily Colonist, October 14, 1886; October 8, 1887; Evening Telegram, October 17, 1889.

<sup>48</sup> JHA, March 4, 1887; Daily Colonist, November 27, 1886.

<sup>49</sup> JHA, March 4, 1887. The Assembly's members were Thorburn, Donnelly, Attorney General Winter, Goodridge and Peters for the government, and Scott and O'Mara (St. John's East) for the Liberal Party. Council representatives were Harvey (a Whitewayite), Moses Monroe (Reform Party), and John Syme (Reform Party), and James McLaughlan (Neutral). Assembly Debates, March 10, 1887, in Evening Mercury, March 15, 1887; Journal of the Legislative Council, March 15, 1887.

The St. John's MHA's, except Murphy, convened a public meeting on March 23 of approximately one hundred of the city's most prominent citizens--fifty from each of the East and West Ends--to discuss incorporation. It is not known who these individuals were. It can be assumed, however, that they represented such groups as the Chamber of Commerce, the Mechanics Society, the Home Industries Society, and the various churches and their affiliated charitable organizations. Scott, who was a member of the joint select committee, submitted the proposed municipal bill to the citizens to ascertain their views on it. The meeting did not make any concrete proposals on how the bill should be framed, but apparently decided to wait until the bill was introduced and published.<sup>50</sup>

The bill proposed to raise a loan to pay off the debentures under the 1863 Sewerage Act; to liquidate the debt against the city in the Sanitary Department; to improve Bannermap Park; and to construct a sewerage system. A municipal board would be created to govern the city, consisting of five members: two were to be government appointees; one elected by the property-holders of the south side of Water Street; and the other two by the rest of the city's

<sup>50</sup> Daily Colonist, March 24, 1887; Scott in Assembly Debates, February 27, 1888, in Evening Mercury, March 2, 1888.

property-holders.<sup>51</sup> This bill, then, would limit control of municipal affairs to the colonial government and the large property-holders which, in fact, meant retaining the status quo. The bill was not printed, Attorney General Winter argued,<sup>52</sup> because the select committee, which was representative of the colonial government, the large property owners by several Legislative councillors, and the citizens of St. John's through their MHA's, had thoroughly considered the issue of municipal affairs, and because of their long deliberations it was too late in the session to have the bill printed and extensively discussed by the citizens. Any changes they wanted to be made could be suggested by the city MHA's when the Assembly went into committee of the whole on the bill.<sup>53</sup> The bill, read on May 2, was scheduled to be committed on May 3. It was, however, deferred that day upon request from Scott and O'Mara<sup>54</sup> who wanted to consult their

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<sup>51</sup> Winter in Assembly Debates, May 2, 3, 1887, in Evening Mercury, May 11, 1887.

<sup>52</sup> J.S. Winter, 1845-1911; Lawyer; MHA Burin, 1873-1885; Speaker of the House of Assembly, 1877-1879; Solicitor General, 1882-1885; MHA Harbour Grace, 1885-1889; Attorney General, 1885-1889; MHA Burin, 1892-1893; Judge, Supreme Court, 1893-1896; MHA Burin, 1897-1900; Premier and Attorney General, 1897-1900.

<sup>53</sup> Winter in Assembly Debates, May 6, 1887, in Evening Mercury, May 11, 1887.

<sup>54</sup> M.J. O'Mara: Lawyer; MHA St. John's East, 1878-1882, 1885-1889.

constituents.<sup>55</sup>

Both Scott and O'Mara, members of the joint select committee, had refused to sign the committee's report. The former said that they had disagreed with the rest of the committee on the board's constitution, the franchise, and the division of the city into three wards. He claimed that he acted in accordance with the wishes of citizens generally, who believed that if St. John's were to have local government, then they should have the right of electing all the board's members.<sup>56</sup>

Opposition to the bill quickly materialized with the Daily Colonist--a Catholic newspaper edited by P.R. Bowers,<sup>57</sup> a Newfoundlander who had worked for many years as a journalist in Canada--in the lead. In a May 4 editorial, Bowers

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<sup>55</sup>Assembly Debates, May 2, 3, 1887, in Evening Mercury, May 9, 10, 1887.

<sup>56</sup>Scott in Assembly Debates, May 6, 1887, and February 27, 1888, in Evening Mercury, May 11, 1887, and March 2, 1888.

<sup>57</sup>Patrick R. Bowers, 1844-1911: born in St. John's, but went to Charlottetown early in his childhood and was educated at St. Dunstan's College; Queen's Printer, Prince Edward Island, 1873; was involved in many Catholic organizations in Charlottetown, including as Secretary of the O'Connell Centenary Celebration in 1875, and Secretary of the Central Council of the Catholic Total Abstinence Union in 1878; came to Newfoundland in 1886 to edit the Daily Colonist, 1886-1892, and later started his own newspaper, the Tribune in 1892-1893; left Newfoundland in 1900 to edit the Sydney Post, 1900-1905. See Bowers' obituary in Evening Telegram, August 19, 1911.

called for the bill's publication before it was "foisted on the citizens. The fact that it has been brought so late in the session renders it possible that it may be rushed through without proper consideration . . . ." Moreover, he suggested that the bill be deferred until another session so that the question of municipal affairs could be "thoroughly ventilated" and a "well-matured measure enacted," satisfying both the government and the citizens.<sup>58</sup>

A provisional committee of property owners held a public meeting on May 5, unanimously condemned the bill and criticized the government for not printing it. These citizens demanded that the bill be deferred for a year and decided to call a mass meeting to protest the bill, if the government were to persist in passing it. A delegation was appointed to convey their views to the St. John's MHA's, who would present them to the government.<sup>59</sup>

The MHA's presented these demands to the Assembly on May 6. Scott argued that the citizens wanted to elect all of the board's members if St. John's were incorporated. However, he said that citizens did not want incorporation because the depressed state of the city's economy did not

<sup>58</sup> Daily Colonist, May 4, 1887.

<sup>59</sup> Evening Mercury, May 6, 1887. John B. Ayre was the chairman of the provisional committee. The delegation consisted of the following: J. B. Ayre, F. Parnell (supply merchant), Charles Kickham (builder), F. St. John (builder), W. H. Whiteley (planter), Thomas Summers (butcher), and Henry Duggan.



... allow the citizens . . . to assume new and grave burdens as this bill would impose upon them . . . "60 Scott regretted that the bill's deferral might possibly mean that no work would commence on a sewerage system during 1887 and impressed upon the government the extreme necessity that some scheme be devised to provide immediate work for the many unemployed men in the city. 61

Murphy opposed the bill for two reasons: first, he claimed the government was afraid to entrust the majority Roman Catholic population with the management of the city if the inhabitants were given full incorporation; second, he criticized the proposed ward and franchise systems because they were designed to protect large property owners and placed the bulk of the taxation upon the middle class. The qualification for board members required the holding of property with an annual rental value of \$600, whereas the qualification of voters was \$40. 62 Scott supported Murphy's contention, admitting that:

... while it may be quite right that property holders should be placed beyond the assaults of a rabble, I depreciate the notion that they are subject

60 Scott in Assembly Debates, May 6, 1887, in Evening Mercury, May 11, 1887.

61 See Scott, Morris and Callanan in Assembly Debates, May 7, 1887, in Evening Mercury, May 11, 1887.

62 Murphy in Assembly Debates, May 6, 1887, in Evening Mercury, May 12, 1887.



to any assaults, and still strongly depreciate the mode in which this bill strives to protect them.<sup>63</sup>

He believed that "... the small property holders of St. John's, men by industry and honourable dealing have acquired a stake in the country, should not be dreaded by the mercantile class as if they are socialists . . . [It] is an insult to the men who are the backbone and sinew of the country . . ." <sup>64</sup> These qualifications furthermore, disenfranchised the working class and smacked of class and even religious discrimination.<sup>65</sup>

Attorney General Winter advanced several reasons why the bill could not be deferred. First, the city badly needed a sewerage system. Second, the cost of maintaining services for St. John's was increasing annually and the colonial government could no longer subsidize municipal expenditure. In its Supply Bill the government, anticipating incorporation, had allocated only enough funds to subsidize the maintenance of municipal services for half a year.<sup>66</sup> Third, the sewerage works would provide much employment in the autumn if

<sup>63</sup> Scott in Assembly Debates, May 6, 1887, in Evening Mercury, May 12, 1887.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Murphy in Assembly Debates, May 6, 1887, in Evening Mercury, May 12, 1887.

<sup>66</sup> Colonial Secretary Fenelon in Legislative Council Debates, May 17, 1887, in Evening Telegram, June 14, 1887.

there was an unsuccessful fishery. Moreover, Winter considered the bill to be "just and equitable" to all the various interests involved. He defended the two government appointees by arguing that since the loan would be raised upon the colony's credit, then the government had a right to this representation so as to protect its financial obligations. He justified the south-side of Water Street being made a separate ward because property ought to have its "fair representation" upon the Board, since these merchants contributed heavily to the colonial treasury:

. . . the greater part of the export and import business of the island is done, not merely in St. John's, but in a very small portion of St. John's, the south-side of Water Street. Property there is consequently more valuable than in any other part of the town. As a matter of fact the south-side of Water Street pays more than one-third of the taxes levied in St. John's. Under a system which divided the wards according to population and gave every elector a vote, the owners of this property would be practically excluded from all share in the government of the town . . . .<sup>67</sup>

However, the government acceded to the protestations of the St. John's MHA's and their constituents by withdrawing the bill on May 11 because it claimed it had no desire to enact legislation against the wishes of the citizens.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Winter in Assembly Debates, May 6, 1887, in Evening Mercury, May 11, 1887.

<sup>68</sup> Attorney General Winter quoted in Daily Colonist, May 12, 1887.

On May 12, the government had a temporary sewerage bill rushed through three readings in one sitting.<sup>69</sup> It authorized the government to borrow \$100,000 which was repayable in twenty-five years.<sup>70</sup> This would be used to pay off the debt charged to the city in the Sanitary Department and commence work on a sewerage system. Moreover, the Water Company would be given authority to increase its water rate to pay for such essential services as lighting and repairing and cleaning the streets and sewers.<sup>71</sup> This rate increase would replace part of the funds which the government had withdrawn for municipal services for 1887. These services would be managed by five commissioners appointed for one year until the opening of the 1888 session. The Commission would consist of three members from the Assembly and two from the Legislative Council who "... would be competent from their positions and knowledge of the wants of the town to see that they were properly executed ...".<sup>72</sup>

All the St. John's MHA's, except Murphy, supported this temporary measure, because it would provide employment.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>69</sup> JHA, May 12, 1887.

<sup>70</sup> Morris in Assembly Debates, February 27, 1888, in Evening Mercury, March 1, 1888.

<sup>71</sup> Evening Mercury, May 14, 1887.

<sup>72</sup> Colonial Secretary Fenelon in Legislative Council Debates, May 17, 1887, in Evening Telegram, June 15, 1887.

<sup>73</sup> See O'Mara in Assembly Debates, May 12, 1887, in Evening Mercury, May 20, 1887; and Morris and Scott in Assembly Debates, February 27, 1888, in Evening Mercury, March 1, 2, 1888.

Moreover, the proposed commission would have included at least two of the city members, the most probable two being Scott and O'Mara.<sup>74</sup> Murphy opposed the bill because taxation could be increased independently of the wishes of the citizens and because Assembly members could sit on the commission.<sup>75</sup> In an open letter to the Daily Colonist, May 13, he tried to generate public opposition to the measure, by requesting citizens to present petitions to the Legislative Council protesting the Assembly's approval of it. Murphy said the bill was a "put-on job":

... the whole job [framing and passing of the bill] was thus put up in one sitting, and connived at by certain well-known members for St. John's. Ordinarily a bill takes four days to go through the house; but this bill . . . is rushed through in one day.<sup>76</sup>

He emphasized that any municipal regulations for St. John's should include an elected board, wholly responsible to the citizens.<sup>77</sup>

The Legislative Council supported the petitions which were presented protesting the bill and defeated it. The councillors agreed with the petition's principle that rate-payers

<sup>74</sup> Evening Telegram, May 13, 1887; letters to Evening Telegram, May 21, 25, 1887.

<sup>75</sup> Murphy in Assembly Debates, May 12, 1887, in Evening Mercury, May 20, 1887.

<sup>76</sup> Daily Colonist, May 13, 1886.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

should be first consulted on any legislation affecting their property.<sup>78</sup> The defeat of the municipal and sewerage bills meant that any further government attempts to incorporate St. John's would have to give the citizens considerable control over their municipal affairs.

The Evening Mercury blamed the defeat of the two bills on the unwillingness of both property and non-property owners to reach a compromise as to the exact definition of the constitution and franchise of any municipal board. The government newspaper asserted that property should be taxed to pay for civic improvements, but should have a "fair representation" upon any municipal board controlling the expenditures on these improvements. This representation was absolutely necessary because it would be

manifestly unjust to give the whole power of taxation and expenditure to the great mass of voters, who having little property, might lay undue burdens on those who have, and recklessly waste the money.

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The Thorburn Government, while determined to impose local government on St. John's, was not willing to give the citizens complete control over their municipal affairs.

In early 1888, rate-payers who favoured the city's incorporation--in anticipation of forthcoming government legislation--organized a meeting on January 9 to discuss

<sup>78</sup> Legislative Council Debates, May 16, 17, 1887, in Evening Telegram, June 14, 15, 1887.

<sup>79</sup> Evening Mercury, May 21, 1887.

municipal affairs. Prominent organizers included Charles Kickham and Frank St. John who had been actively involved with the 1887 provisional committee which protested the government's municipal bill.<sup>80</sup> Much impetus for the establishment of a municipal corporation came from those citizens already familiar with corporations in other cities. Many of these citizens were either non-Newfoundland born or if Newfoundland-born had travelled extensively abroad. These rate-payers were unanimous in their decision that should St. John's have a municipal corporation then they would elect all the members and control the corporation's assessments and expenditures. A committee was appointed to draft a municipal bill which would first be submitted to another meeting for ratification, and second, to the St. John's MHA's for presentation to the House of Assembly when it opened. Moreover, this committee had the authority to add to its membership to make it representative of the various classes and commercial interests in both ends of the city. This increased membership consisted of the officers of the Chamber of Commerce, the Mechanics Society, the Benevolent Irish Society, the various local industries, and the building trades.<sup>81</sup> Confronted

<sup>80</sup> Evening Mercury and Daily Colonist, January 9, 1888. F. St. John and Charles Kickham were prominent in both committees. Daily Colonist, January 14, 1888, and letter to Daily Colonist, August 27, 1888.

<sup>81</sup> For example, J.B. Angel and Jeremiah Halleran were both born in Nova Scotia, while P.R. Bowers, the editor of the Daily Colonist, was apparently quite familiar with the

with this organized movement, the Thorburn Government was, it would seem ready to modify its legislation if it were found objectionable to the rate-payers.<sup>82</sup>

The ad hoc committee, appointed to draft a municipal bill, recommended on February 23 that the council consist of seven members, elected by the rate-payers. The city was to be divided into six wards, with one councillor for each. The seventh member would be elected at large. Although the specific nature of the franchise the committee proposed is not known, the vote in general was to be given to any taxpayer who paid at least three dollars annually in municipal taxes. The committee also recommended that the proposed municipal board should not be held responsible for any debts resulting from Board of Works expenditures on city improvements. The rate-payers adjourned the meeting, and no further action was taken until the government introduced and publicly circulated its bill.<sup>83</sup>

The Evening Mercury wrote on April 17 that the recently circulated government bill was a:

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municipal institutions of Canadian cities. Other members had probably travelled abroad on business trips and for vacations. Evening Mercury, Daily Colonist, and Evening Telegram, January 10, 1888. See Appendix C for membership of this committee.

<sup>82</sup> Evening Mercury, February 15, 17, 1888. Also, Morris in Assembly Debates, February 27, 1888, in Evening Mercury, March 1, 1888.

<sup>83</sup> Daily Colonist, February 24; April 21, 1888.



. . . fair and honest attempt to meet and satisfy conflicting claims and interests, while the rights of property are respected, the rights of rate-payers are also recognized .<sup>84</sup>

The bill proposed a municipal board consisting of two government appointees and three elected members. The latter were to hold office for four years, the former at the discretion of the Governor-in-Council. The franchise was based on a property tax, and every rate-payer was permitted a cumulative vote to a maximum of six. The number of votes a rate-payer received in each ward was directly proportional to the amount of taxes paid. Moreover, absentee landlords were permitted a proxy vote and business corporations a vote each. The bill, furthermore, authorized the government to raise a loan which would pay for the extension of a sewerage system; street improvements; the lighting of the town; and to liquidate the debt charged to the city in the Sanitary Department. The board's annual revenues would be derived from water and sewerage assessments; from a duty on all coal imported into the town; from rents on all Crown property within city limits; and from the annual sums appropriated by the Legislature for roads, streets, and bridges in the two St. John's districts. The bill gave the colonial government effective control over the municipal board, since the latter could neither raise any loans nor impose taxation without

<sup>84</sup> Evening Mercury, April 17, 1888.

legislative approval.<sup>85</sup>

The citizens' committee for incorporation objected strongly to the bill and convened a protest meeting on April 16. A delegation<sup>86</sup> was formed to confer with the city MHA's and to discuss several amendments. These MHA's were to ask the government to amend it in conformity with the provisions of the citizens' bill.<sup>87</sup> The bill's most objectionable clauses were the proxy and cumulative votes, the assumption by St. John's of the debt in the Sanitary Department, and government representation on the municipal board.<sup>88</sup> The rate-payers, however, did not want the bill defeated. Instead, they would consent to two appointees if their representation were increased from three to five.<sup>89</sup> The government agreed to all these demands,<sup>90</sup> except the one not making St. John's liable for the debt. This debt had been a contentious grievance with outport MHA's who had been by 1888 quite firm

<sup>85</sup> The bill was printed in the Daily Colonist, April 16, 17, 20, 23, 24, 26, 1888.

<sup>86</sup> Members of this delegation are not known.

<sup>87</sup> Daily Colonist, April 21, 1888.

<sup>88</sup> Scott, Morris, and Murphy in Assembly Debates, April 16, 1888, in Evening Mercury, April 21, 1888.

<sup>89</sup> Scott in Assembly Debates, April 16, 24, 1888, in Evening Mercury, April 25, 1888.

<sup>90</sup> Winter in Assembly Debates, April 23, 1888, in Evening Mercury, April 25, 1888; and Evening Telegram, April 25, 26, 1888.

in their insistence that the city pay for its own services.<sup>91</sup> The government wanted to relieve itself of this financial embarrassment, because otherwise it presumably feared that a continuation of the existing municipal system would cause it to lose some of its political power in the outports.<sup>92</sup> However, the St. John's MHA's consented on an understanding from the government that the bill would only be a tentative measure and that if either the city MHA's or the rate-payers wanted any alterations made to the Act in the 1889 session, then the government would do so.<sup>93</sup>

The Legislative Council passed the bill with certain amendments. Its most serious objection was that the qualification for members of the proposed council--the same as that for voters--was too low. This provision, most councillors feared, would have a tendency to place persons upon the municipal council "wholly incompetent and unfitted for the important and intricate duties that will devolve upon

<sup>91</sup> See LeMessurier in Assembly Debates, February 16, 1888, in Evening Mercury, February 17, 1888; and Morine in Assembly Debates, February 23, 1888, in Evening Mercury, February 25, 1888.

<sup>92</sup> Premier Thorburn's manifesto to the voters of Trinity district in the 1889 general election stated that ". . . by the St. John's Municipal Act, the outlying districts have been freed from the injustice of being taxed for works which are being carried out for the benefit of the people of St. John's. . . ." Evening Mercury, July 24, 1889.

<sup>93</sup> Scott in Assembly Debates, March 27, 1889, in Evening Mercury, April 3, 1889.

it . . . .<sup>94</sup> The amendment proposed to raise this qualification from the payment of \$2.75 per annum in water rates to that of \$8.25.<sup>95</sup> Another amendment allowed a councillor to hold a contract from the Municipal Council only in a partnership.<sup>96</sup> Critics of the Municipal Council later charged that this later amendment had been inserted at the insistence of Moses Monroe,<sup>97</sup> a Legislative councillor and businessman, who intended to run for municipal office.<sup>98</sup> The government agreed to these amendments, rather than have the bill defeated. The first election under this bill was to be held on August 30.

Although there were 3,641 eligible voters,<sup>99</sup> only 1,521 were on the voters' list which was based on the number of rate-payers who paid taxes to the Water Company. Over two thousand taxpayers were disenfranchised because they were not listed on the Company's account books, even though

<sup>94</sup>C.R. Ayre in Legislative Council Debates, May 1, 1888, in Evening Telegram, May 11, 1888.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid., and May 9, 1888. This change meant that prospective candidates must hold property with an annual rental value of \$120, while that for voters was \$40. Evening Telegram, April 26, May 9, 1888.

<sup>96</sup>Evening Telegram, May 9, 1888.

<sup>97</sup>See Appendix D.

<sup>98</sup>See for instance, letters to Evening Telegram, November 15, 19, 1888.

<sup>99</sup>Evening Telegram, April 26, 1888.

they had had paid water and sewerage rates.<sup>100</sup> It is not known if this disenfranchisement were a deliberate act by the government, but it is perhaps worth noting that Thorburn had been the Company's President for several years,<sup>101</sup> and thus was obviously familiar with the Company's operations.

Disenfranchisement was, nonetheless, not an issue among candidates in the election campaign. Instead, it was a contest between personalities and, because of the small number of eligible voters, voters were activated more by private reasons of friendships than by strong feelings of civic interest.<sup>102</sup> Candidates were chosen either by nominations at public meetings or by citizens signing requisitions for a particular individual. The former was promoted by Catholic politicians, who had been active in the rate-payers' attempt to get a municipal council completely free from any control of the colonial government. These politicians also hoped that these public meetings would encourage the participation of as many citizens as possible in city affairs.<sup>103</sup> They regarded the requisition method, whereby candidates were chosen without any public participation, as "one of the surest ways to kill out all interest in civic

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<sup>100</sup> Letters to Evening Telegram, October 24, 27, 29, 1888. Apparently this irregularity resulted from the Company's mismanagement of its accounts:

<sup>101</sup> See the General Water Company's Annual Reports to the colonial government in JHA, 1878-1886.

<sup>102</sup> Evening Telegram, September 1, 1888.

<sup>103</sup> Daily Colonist, July 19, 1888.

affairs . . . .<sup>104</sup>

The first meeting was held on July 20 to "consider the best means of selecting candidates for the representation of the several wards."<sup>105</sup> (See Figure 1). It was a poorly attended meeting of approximately twenty-five rate-payers, who decided to appoint two chairmen for each ward to hold public meetings in their respective wards for nominating a candidate.<sup>106</sup> Many of these ward chairmen were anti-confederates opposed to the Thorburn Government's intentions to send a delegation to Ottawa in September to discuss possible terms of confederation with Canada.<sup>107</sup> The anti-confederates who had the support of the Catholic community and most of Water Street were both opponents and supporters of the government. The former included both followers of Whiteway and Morris, while the latter comprised an assortment of Catholic and Protestant merchants. The Daily

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., July 5, 1888.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., July 19, 1888.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., July 21, 1888. The ward chairmen were: Ward 1 - J. Halleran (Catholic, builder), and S. Canning (Accountant); Ward 2 - J. Haddon (land surveyor), and F. St. John (Catholic, baker); Ward 3 - J.W. Nichols (Methodist, teacher, School of Art), and J. Callanan (Catholic, cabinet maker); Ward 4 - Michael Power (Catholic, master cooper), and J.B. Ayre (Methodist, baker); Ward 5 - James Angel (Methodist, boiler and engine manufacturer), and L.J. Geran (Catholic, laundry company president).

<sup>107</sup> For a discussion of these negotiations, see Hiller, "A History," pp. 155-161; and Harvey Mitchell, "Canada's Negotiations with Newfoundland, 1887-1895," in G.A. Rawlyk (ed.), Historical Essays on the Atlantic Provinces (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1971), pp. 242-245.



Colonist publicized these ward meetings, believing that they would develop civic interest, and wrote that "the success or failure of the municipal council, will, in a great measure, depend upon the first councillors elected

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Despite these concerted efforts there was much public apathy towards the election.<sup>109</sup> Just over half of the registered voters cast a ballot. (See Table 1). Many citizens probably abstained because they regarded the Municipal Act and franchise as objectionable, and hoped to have it so amended at the next legislative session to give the rate-payers greater control over their municipal affairs.<sup>110</sup> The only known confederate elected was a Presbyterian, Moses Monroe, but his election was probably as much the result of his own personal popularity as his strong commercial influence in the city. The other four elected councillors--J.T. Carnell, F. St. John, M. Power, and W.D. Morrison--<sup>111</sup> were all middle-class rate-payers<sup>112</sup> and included one Anglican, one Presbyterian, and two Roman

<sup>108</sup> Daily Colonist, June 23, July 5, 1888.

<sup>109</sup> The Times, August 29, 1888; Evening Telegram, September 1, 1888.

<sup>110</sup> The Times, August 29, 1888; letters to Evening Telegram, August 10, 13, 1888.

<sup>111</sup> See Appendix D.

<sup>112</sup> Letter to Daily Colonist, August 28, 1888.



TABLE 1

## ST. JOHN'S 1888 MUNICIPAL ELECTION RESULTS

Ward	Candidates				Votes Polled
	Name	Political Affiliation	Religion	Occupation	
1	J.T.Carnell	Whitewayite	Anglican	Carriage Builder	87
	G.T.Rendell	Reform	Methodist	Merchant	65
	J.Halleran	Whitewayite	Roman Catholic	Builder	27
2	F.St.John	Reform	Roman Catholic	Baker	100
	J.T.Southcott	?	Anglican	Architect, Builder	92
	G.E.Bearns	?	(?) Roman Catholic	Grocer	36
3	M.Monroe	Reform	Presbyterian	Merchant	134
	J.B.Ayre	Whitewayite	Methodist	Baker	54
4	M.Power	Morris supporter	Roman Catholic	Master Cooper	57
	M.Tobin	Reform	Roman Catholic	Licensed publican	51
5	W.D.Morison	Reform	Presbyterian	Grocer	57
	F.J.Brien	Whitewayite	Roman Catholic	Printer	27
	L.J.Geran	Morris supporter	Roman Catholic	Merchant	22
	J.T.Murphy	Reform (?)	Roman Catholic	Grocer	11
	M.Lash	?	?	Accountant	1

Source: Evening Telegram, August 31, September 1, 1888; "Report of the Remaining Officer for the St. John's Municipal Council" in Incoming Correspondence of the Colonial Secretary's Office, Letters and Petitions, GN2/2, 1888.

Catholics. Morfoc, Morison, and St. John were all government supporters, whereas Carnell and Powers were White-way and Morris supporters respectively.

The government appointed two Water Street merchants-- James Goodfellow (a Presbyterian) and James P. Fox (a Roman Catholic)--<sup>113</sup> who had been directors of the Water Company from 1887 to 1888, as its representatives on the municipal council. This gave the government five supporters on the new council, while its opponents had two. The first St. John's Municipal Council was, then, a political council, composed of supporters of colonial parties.

The establishment of a Municipal Council entirely independent from the colonial government was, in general, supported by only a small segment of citizens, who were both opponents and supporters of the Thorburn Government. However, most citizens, including the Water Street merchants, were either apathetic or opposed to incorporation. Yet, the need for some distinct form of municipal institutions was obviously long overdue, as indicated by the establishment of a Sanitary Department in 1879 to improve the sanitary condition of the city. But this was only a stop-gap measure, until a more extensive sewerage system could be constructed. The failure of the colonial government directly to do so in the early 1880's meant that a system

<sup>113</sup> See Appendix D.

would have to be provided under incorporation. The several sewerage and municipal bills of the 1885-1888 period were designed specifically for that purpose.

The Thorburn Government was unwilling to give St. John's full incorporation with an elective council. Claiming there were "but few inducements offered us to follow the practice of other countries with regard to the constitution of municipalities," the government attempted to enact legislation in 1887 and 1888 which possessed "features peculiar to itself, and for which no exact precedent, perhaps, can be found."<sup>114</sup> Such peculiarities consisted mainly of sections retaining control of the proposed council by large property owners. These bills were, however, opposed by citizens wanting full incorporation. The government was unwilling to make this concession, but did compromise in 1888 on several of the bill's sections these citizens found objectionable. But the disenfranchisement of a majority of rate-payers in the municipal election was resented by these citizens who did not want any partisan politics in municipal affairs.

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<sup>114</sup> Attorney General Winter in Assembly Debates, May 6, 1889, in Evening Mercury, May 11, 1887.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE FIRST ST. JOHN'S MUNICIPAL COUNCIL, 1888-1892

The Municipal Council was able to provide many of the services which the citizens demanded of it. A new sewerage system was constructed; streets were widened; side drains constructed; city lighting was vastly improved by the acquisition of electric lamps; and two public parks laid out, one in each end of the city.<sup>1</sup> These improvements were not, however, attained without a considerable expense to citizens. When the Council assumed office in late 1888, the civic debt was \$607,000, which represented the loan the colonial government raised to purchase the Water Company; to repay an accumulated overdraft to the government for expenditures on municipal services; and to provide for improved services.<sup>2</sup> This debt at the end of 1891 had been increased to \$781,953.58,<sup>3</sup> much of this increase having been expended on the sewerage system. These expenditures were,

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<sup>1</sup> John Harris, "Three Years of City Government," The Holy Branch (December, 1891), p. 6. See Brian J. Wadden, "The St. John's Electric Light Company, 1885-1892," winning entry in the Newfoundland Government Arts and Letters Competition, 1956-1957, pp. 7-17.

<sup>2</sup> Appendix E.

<sup>3</sup> Appendix F.

nonetheless, often criticized by both politicians and the press as "extravagant" and the councillors--who, as one later commented, attempted to make the many improvements the citizens requested--<sup>4</sup> were often condemned as "boodlers." The Council became in fact, not only a convenient source of patronage for the two political parties, but also a scapegoat for politicians in their criticisms of each other.

The Council held its first regular meeting on September 28, 1888, behind closed doors to appoint its senior officials,<sup>5</sup> with several positions being political appointments. For instance, I.R. McNeily, a nephew of Chairman Goodfellow, was made city solicitor, while the other candidate for this position was a son of Councillor Morison.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, many councillors eventually managed to have relatives selected for positions at subsequent meetings, the most notable being Councillor Monroe's nephew as

<sup>4</sup> Interview with John Harris in Evening Herald, July 27, 1899.

<sup>5</sup> Appointed were John Syme (accountant); P.W. Kelly (secretary); W.B. Kearney (accountant for the Water Department); I.R. McNeily (solicitor); and John Hughes (superintendent of the Sanitary Department), Daily Colonist, September 29, 1888. Syme and McNeily were government supporters, while Kelly and Hughes were transferred from the Board of Works, and Kearney from the General Water Company GN9/1, Minutes of the Executive Council, August 21, 1888 (located at the Newfoundland Archives).

<sup>6</sup> Daily Colonist, October 1, 1888.

city engineer, and Councillor Carnell's uncle as the East End Road Inspector.<sup>7</sup> Other municipal employees were transferred to the Council from the Board of Works under Section 41 of the Municipal Act, and subject to removal only by the Governor-in-Council.

The Council encountered many problems in reorganizing and consolidating municipal affairs. The departments taken over were apparently in complete confusion, the affairs of the Water Company being "discreditable" and the Fire Company Department a "sink of corruption".

... the Water Company's Office had degenerated into a place of idleness - loafing, drinking and smoking . . . . The Late [Fire] Superintendent, aided by others, had completely betrayed his trust, and the Council found an expenditure for the year previous to their taking office of close on \$8,000 for the Fire Department . . . [while] the Fire Department cost for 1889 [was] a sum of \$4,954

Council had problems also with the employees transferred from the Board of Works, especially in its attempts to exercise any control over them. Many of them refused to obey the Council's orders, and the Council could not dismiss them without government approval, even though it paid their salaries.<sup>91</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., October 12, November 6, 1888.

<sup>8</sup> Monroe in Legislative Council Debates, May 7, 1890, in Evening Telegram, May 13, 1890.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., and Monroe in Legislative Council Debates, May 23, 1892, in Evening Telegram, June 10, 1892.

The Council was not only handicapped by the limited authority granted to it, but also by the confusion created by colonial acts giving the government jurisdiction over some aspects of municipal affairs.<sup>10</sup> It is hardly surprising that a correspondent in the Evening Telegram complained that he could not understand the resulting tangle, and suggested that the laws applying to St. John's be consolidated.<sup>11</sup> He was probably not untypical.

Opposition to the Municipal Council developed almost immediately after it had taken office. Not unexpectedly, this first materialized in the Daily Colonist, whose editor was adamant in his attempts both to get full incorporation and to encourage public awareness of civic affairs.<sup>12</sup> Bowers criticized the Council for creating jobs for friends at the taxpayers' expense, and, comparing it with the corruption of American cities, particularly New York, labelled Council's actions "Boss Tweedism," and stated that "municipal government in Newfoundland must not be allowed to fall into disrepute . . ."<sup>13</sup> The newspaper, in an implicit reference

<sup>10</sup> These Acts included the 1863 Sewerage Act; 1864 Bannerman Park Act; 1868 Municipal Regulations Act; St. John's Rebuilding Act; 1877 Fire Brigade Act; 1879 Sanitary Improvement Act; and the 1887 Water Company Consolidation Act. See Moses Monroe's public meeting, November 30, 1891, in Evening Herald, December 1, 1891.

<sup>11</sup> Evening Telegram, December 8, 1888.

<sup>12</sup> Daily Tribune, January 4, 1893.

<sup>13</sup> Daily Colonist, October 1, 4, 1888.

to a growing public disenchantment with the Council, called on "those who believe in clean government to now look out for themselves."<sup>14</sup> The Daily Colonist was quickly deluged with letters critical of the Council's appointments, and against certain councillors helping themselves to the business they themselves were generating. One correspondent, for instance, complained that Councillor Carnell, a large carriage builder, was doing work on the Council's sanitary carts at his own shop and suggested that work should be put out to tender.<sup>15</sup> Another noted that a conflict of interest existed regarding Councillor Monroe, who was the secretary of the Electric Light Company which was negotiating with the Council for a lighting contract.<sup>16</sup>

This press opposition culminated in a large protest meeting on October 17 attended by approximately 2,000 citizens.<sup>17</sup> The impetus for this meeting came from citizens generally concerned about municipal affairs, advocating full incorporation and a separation of partisan politics from municipal affairs.<sup>18</sup> It is significant, though, that

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., October 1, 1888.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., October 16, 1888.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., October 15, 1888.

<sup>17</sup> Daily Colonist, Evening Telegram, October 18, 1888. It is probable, however, that this attendance figure is inflated.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. These included James Murray, W.H. Whiteley, J.W. Nichols, Frederick Parnell, Charles Kickham, L. Geran, J. Pitman, Thomas Witche, and T.J. Murphy. The Chairman was Whiteley. Also, see Murray's letter to Evening Telegram, March 16, 1889.



the most important organizers were political opponents of the Thorburn Government--for example, T.J. Murphy, W.H. Whiteley,<sup>19</sup> and James Murray,<sup>20</sup> a political independent and one of the chief organizers.<sup>21</sup> Government supporters such as Charles Kickham were fewer in number and influence. The speakers demanded closer control over municipal finances, and condemned Council's appointments and salaries. They demanded a repeal of the Municipal Act, and its replacement by full incorporation as a means of ending the general government's domination of municipal affairs. Fears were expressed that municipal taxation might depress property, and suggestions were made for the formation of an "association" to guard against any possible "reckless expenditure of the city's taxes."<sup>22</sup> Resolutions passed requested that the Council's future meetings be public and open to the press, and that the voting by councillors be open and not by secret ballot. The Council was also asked to make public its plans to prevent the occurrence of an

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<sup>19</sup>William H. Whiteley, 18--: Planter; MHA, Harbour Grace, 1889-1893.

<sup>20</sup>James Murray, 1843-1900: Merchant and local manufacturer; MHA, Burgeo-LaPoile, 1889-1894; see obituary in the Evening Herald, January 17, 1900.

<sup>21</sup>Morris in Assembly Debates, May 10, 1892, in Evening Telegram, June 22, 1892.

<sup>22</sup>Daily Colonist, October 19, 1888.

annual deficit.<sup>23</sup> No action was taken on the suggestion that a 'Defence Association' be formed.

Neither the government nor the Whiteway press supported the principles of the meeting's organizers. The Evening Mercury staunchly defended the Council and chastised the organizers on the grounds that the Council had just assumed office, and needed time to familiarize itself with the administration of municipal affairs. The meeting was dismissed as an expression of personal discontents.

No doubt, [the Mercury wrote] disappointed [municipal] candidates and their friends had something to do with these explosions of anger; and public feelings were worked on by persons who had private grudges . . . .<sup>24</sup>

The Whitewayite Telegram agreed, commenting that:

. . . it was the outcome of a smothered and semi-private agitation, which has been going on here for two weeks past concerning the exercise of patronage by the Municipal Council - an agitation which seems to have been originally inspired more by personal malevolence than by considerations of justice . . . .<sup>25</sup>

In effect, both political parties disassociated themselves from the reform movement. While the Evening Mercury's response was obviously a defence of the Council, the Evening Telegram was cautious, unwilling to support an agitation which might be premature.

<sup>23</sup> Evening Telegram, October 18, 1888.

<sup>24</sup> Evening Mercury, October 19, 1888.

<sup>25</sup> Evening Telegram, October 18, 1888.

But opposition to the Council continued. The Daily Colonist had almost a daily barrage of letters containing suggestions for improvements in the Municipal Act, and charges of alleged corruption. The organizers of the October 17 meeting convened another meeting on October 23, and decided to form a "Citizens Defence Association," (CDA). Speakers vehemently objected to the existing system, which permitted the Governor-in-Council and the Municipal Council with legislative approval to impose what taxation they wished. Full incorporation would, they thought, give the rate-payers more control over municipal finances, and suggested this could be done by having

. . . all accounts, reports, etc., laid before the rate-payers, at a mass meeting, who would thereupon, appoint a committee of audit to examine vouchers, etc., . . . to preserve an honest and faithful administration in city affairs . . . .

By this method, "clean civic government" could be achieved.<sup>26</sup> The organizers then appointed an executive committee to prepare plans for future meetings. On November 5, this committee appointed sub-committees to draft a petition, the Association's constitution, and to find a convenient hall for future meetings.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup>Daily Colonist, October 24, 1888. Speakers included James Murray, T.J. Murphy, Frederick Patnell, and Charles Kickham.

<sup>27</sup>Evening Telegram, November 6, 1888.

At this point the Evening Telegram changed policy, and began to support the CDA. Its excuse was the Council's decision to delay work on sewerage extension and a west end park until the government engineer had visited England and returned with suitable advice; however, there can be little doubt that the Opposition had now noticed that the CDA was potentially a vehicle through which to attack a government facing an election within a year.<sup>28</sup>

The government press now attacked the CDA, commenting that any criticism of the Council should be "fair and open," and considered the accusations made by anonymous writers to the other newspapers to be absurd since they were not proven to be true. It stated the Council was "admirably handling the city's problems," and that "before 'Defence Associations' are formed, would it not be well to wait until some villainy is proved . . ."<sup>29</sup>

The Municipal Council was mainly preoccupied with the business of internal organization and administration--for instance, the appointment of annual standing committees to govern its various departments--<sup>30</sup> and with

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., November 3, 12, 1888.

<sup>29</sup> Evening Mercury, November 15, December 8, 1888. Both the Daily Colonist and the Evening Telegram frequently contained letters criticizing the Council, the government and the municipal system. James Murray, in particular wrote several letters to the Daily Colonist on these subjects.

<sup>30</sup> Committees appointed were: Finance and Ways and Means (Monroe, Fox, Power, and Morison); City Chambers

providing such basic municipal services as street and sewer repairs, more lighting, and the water supply. It also burnt the Riverhead Hospital, a move which met popular approval since that institution had been generally regarded as a health hazard.<sup>31</sup> Although the Council decided not to start sewerage construction until 1889, it did undertake a survey.<sup>32</sup> It is quite apparent from an examination of the Council's weekly proceedings as reported in the local newspapers that Monroe was its most dominant member. This would explain why the Council ignored the press protests and the CDA, and appointed Monroe's nephew as city engineer.<sup>33</sup>

The subject of municipal reform was kept constantly before the public during the winter of 1888-89 by both the press and the CDA. The Daily Colonist, besides anonymous letters on municipal affairs, occasionally carried articles on municipal governments in other countries, which emphasized active civic participation.<sup>34</sup> The Citizens Defence

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and Clerks Department (St. John, Power, Morison, and Monroe); Sanitary and Fire Department (Carnell, Power, and Fox), Evening Mercury, Daily Colonist, December 7, 1888.

<sup>31</sup> Evening Mercury, Daily Colonist, December 29, 1888.

<sup>32</sup> Daily Colonist, November 7, 1888.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., November 6, 1888.

<sup>34</sup> See Daily Colonist, 1888; for December 13, 19 and

Association usually met weekly, particularly in early 1889, to discuss municipal affairs generally, and to prepare an amended municipal bill for presentation to the Legislature. It condemned any action--by the Government or the Council--not in the best interests of the community. At its January 14 meeting, for instance, the Association censured the Government's recent imposition of a 20 per cent duty on articles imported by the Municipal Council, while on February 4 it demanded a full investigation of all municipal departments,<sup>35</sup> in view of the corruption uncovered in the Fire Department, which led to the dismissal of the Fire Superintendent.<sup>36</sup> Although the Association contained some supporters of the government, most members were not, and it was largely a Whitewayite organization.

Preparations for an amended municipal bill were made at the Association's January 14 meeting, with the appointment of a six-man committee to draft the necessary amendments.<sup>37</sup> These were thoroughly discussed at subsequent Association meetings, before being presented to a general rate-payers' meeting on February 28. At the same time,

<sup>35</sup> Evening Telegram, January 15, February 8, 1889.

<sup>36</sup> Proceedings of the St. John's Municipal Council, January 17, 1889, as reported in the Evening Mercury, January 18, 1889.

<sup>37</sup> Evening Telegram, January 15, 1889.

Association members canvassed the city, procuring signatures from the "solid middle class" in support of the amendments. By March 13, one thousand had been obtained.<sup>38</sup> The canvassers encountered strong opposition from some large property holders to the Association's proposal for full incorporation. One Association member wrote that this opposition was based on conservative fears that "it would confer the power of taxing on persons who might not be interested as property-holders or solid tax-payers in the economical administration of city government. . . ."<sup>39</sup> Another member narrowed this opposition to about "forty men on Water Street."<sup>40</sup>

The Association's municipal bill would have given the city greater financial and political independence from the colonial government. Included were proposals for the Council to raise a loan upon its own credit to pay off the \$607,000 loan the government was authorized to raise under the 1888 Municipal Act; to increase the Council's membership from five to ten, who would be elected annually; and to abolish government representation on the Council. Members of the Legislature would not be eligible to be a councillor, and the Council would have complete authority

<sup>38</sup> Daily Colonist, March 7, 13, 1889.

<sup>39</sup> Evening Telegram, March 9, 1889.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., March 13, 1889.

over its officials, including those who had been transferred from the Board of Works. The Council would be required to present a detailed statement of accounts before an annual rate-payers' meeting, where a rate-payers' committee would be appointed to examine these accounts. In addition, the CDA wanted all goods imported by the Council to be admitted duty free, and for it to be permitted without first having legislative sanction to impose and collect any taxation on property within city limits the Council deemed expedient. A poll tax of one dollar would be imposed on every male subject between twenty-one and sixty years who did not pay any other municipal taxation. Finally, the CDA wanted the franchise to be given to any male twenty-one years and over who paid municipal taxation.<sup>41</sup> The petition, asking for these amendments, was twenty-four feet long and contained between 1200-1300 signatures.<sup>42</sup> It was presented to the House of Assembly on March 27 by P. J. Scott (Liberal, St. John's West), who told the House that the city MHA's had only consented to the 1888 Act because they understood it to be a tentative measure, which could be changed in the 1889 session if either the members or the rate-payers so

<sup>41</sup> "Resolutions to be proposed in committee of the whole in relation to amendment of St. John's Municipal Act," in Bills, House of Assembly, 1889; Morine in Assembly Debates, April 11, 1889, in Evening Mercury, April 24, 1889.

<sup>42</sup> Evening Telegram, March 28, 1889.



wished. He asserted that the government could certainly increase its popularity in the city, if it accepted the proposed amendments.<sup>43</sup>

The Premier regarded the petition as a political ploy by his opponents, and, at first, refused to have the House consider the petition. Opposing Scott's motion for a committee of the whole, Thorburn claimed that he had not heard any complaints from the councillors, or any other source, which would warrant us to alter the present law without first giving it a fair trial, and seeing which portion of the Bill needs to be amended.<sup>44</sup>

He emphasized, however, that this was his own position, and not necessarily that of the government or his Party.<sup>45</sup>

Thorburn later changed his stand on Scott's insistence that the Assembly should at least hear the request of the petitioners.<sup>46</sup> In doing so, the government stated that it was under no commitment to accept the amendments. Instead, it would be "simply to court discussion upon the subject of its defects as pointed out by the petitioners. . . ."<sup>47</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Scott in Assembly Debates, March 27, 1889, in Evening Mercury, April 3, 1889.

<sup>44</sup> Thorburn in Assembly Debates, April 3, 1889, in Evening Mercury, April 8, 1889.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Scott in Assembly Debates, April 3, 1889, in Evening Mercury, April 9, 1889.

<sup>47</sup> Receiver General Donnelly in Assembly Debates, April 3, 1889, in Evening Mercury, April 9, 1889.

The Assembly debated the petition in a marathon sitting during the night of April 11-12.<sup>48</sup> The government was adamant in its refusal to amend the Municipal Act during the session. The Attorney General disputed any claims as to the Act's 'temporary' nature, asserting it worked very well:

. . . it is true, as has been stated by honourable members, that it was observed at the time that Act was before the House that it was not a perfect measure; but this was because difficulties were naturally expected in the carrying out of the machinery of the Act itself. As a matter of fact, however, no difficulty has arisen in the application of the Act.

Winter supported Thorburn's contention that the Council's constitution should not be altered for the present, but be continued for a longer period so that any defects it might have would become evident:

. . . The Legislature, having obtained some experience of the working of the Act, would be enabled to consider what amendments are desirable.

Government supporters were particularly critical of the poll tax, which proposed giving

. . . a dollar vote an equal voice in the municipal government with the man who was paying the largest amount of taxes, and an equal power of imposing burthens upon property-holders, while he himself could be no way burthened beyond the

<sup>48</sup> Evening Mercury, April 12, 1889.

<sup>49</sup> Winter in Assembly Debates, April 11, 1889, in Evening Mercury, April 20, 1889.

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optional tax of a dollar. Such a proposal would admit of the manufacture of votes at elections by unscrupulous candidates. <sup>50</sup>

Moreover, the government was probably unwilling to give St. John's full incorporation because of the depressed state of the fishery. With many of the Water Street merchants heavily in debt to the local commercial banks,<sup>51</sup> the government, it seems, was reluctant to permit the Municipal Council any financial independence, which would inevitably lead to a larger civic debt and increased taxation. Given the government's intransigent position, and despite the protracted debate by the St. John's MHA's--which the Evening Mercury referred to as "bellowing while no one listened"--<sup>52</sup> the resolutions for accepting the petition's amendments were defeated by a party vote.<sup>53</sup> The government's acceptance of the amendments, promoted mainly by its opponents, would have been tantamount to an admittance that its municipal policy was a failure--a politically embarrassing situation with a general election due within several months.

The CDA's response to the defeat was predictable, as James Murray wrote to the Evening Telegram the following

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<sup>50</sup> Donald Morison in Assembly Debates, April 11, 1889, in Evening Mercury, April 22, 1889.

<sup>51</sup> See Miller, "A History," pp. 177-184, for an analysis of the Newfoundland fishery in the 1880's and early 1890's.

<sup>52</sup> Evening Mercury, April 12, 1889.

<sup>53</sup> JHA, 1889, April 12, 1889.

day that any "attempt to get justice and fair play . . . is out of the question under the present administration . . . ."<sup>54</sup> Although the CDA had received numerous signatures to its petition, citizens in general remained apathetic to municipal affairs. This civic inertia was obviously demonstrated when one of the major debating clubs scheduled a public lecture on municipal reform.

The Victoria Literary Institute invited Murray to give a public lecture on April 26, believing that there would be a large attendance, because of the recent interest shown by rate-payers in the CDA petition.<sup>55</sup> The lecture, nevertheless, had to be postponed, because very few rate-payers attended, despite advanced public notices in the press.<sup>56</sup> The Evening Mercury was the only one of the three dailies to give any coverage, and was boisterous in its ridicule:

Great expectations were formed regarding Mr. Murray's Lecture . . . . We were told that there was a perfect convulsion among the people on this subject; and then when the popular leader, Mr. Murray came to deliver his lecture, the audience would be overwhelming. In fact we were under the impression that a police force would be needed to keep order and prevent the doors being forced open before the time. Well, "the hour and the Man" were there, but absolutely no audience. Not even one of the

<sup>54</sup> Evening Telegram, April 13, 1889.

<sup>55</sup> Evening Mercury, April 29, 1889.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., April 23, Daily Colonist, April 26, 1889.

Committee, or of his supporters presented himself. After a time, some 8 or 9 young men from the shops strolled in; but Mr. Murray declined to "waste his sweetness on the desert air", and the lecture was "still born."<sup>57</sup>

Both the Evening Telegram and the Daily Colonist remained silent, embarrassed by this evidence of apathy. With very few genuine political independents--Bowers and Murray were exceptions--municipal reform, because of public apathy, tended to be politically weak. In addition, the reform movement was dominated by colonial politicians, who mostly lived in St. John's and who were content with a system that gave them the possibility of manipulating municipal affairs to their advantage. For the most part, municipal politicians came from the same small social group as their colonial counterparts, and supported one of the two political parties. The CDA disintegrated after the defeat of its petition because several of its chief leaders, Murray and Whiteley, decided to concentrate their efforts to seek election as outport MHA's, the former as an independent, while the latter as a Whiteway candidate. The other leaders apparently saw fit not to maintain the CDA as a separate organization after Murray's and Whiteley's departure and the withdrawal of support by such government supporters as Kickham and L. O'B. Furlong.<sup>58</sup> It is no surprise, then

<sup>57</sup> Evening Mercury, April 27, 1889.

<sup>58</sup> L. O'B. Furlong, 1856-1908: merchant; MHA, St. John's East, 1893-1904; Chairman of the Board of Works, 1894.

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that in the general election, the city politicians championed the cause of municipal reform.

Political alignments in the 1889 election were based on economic and not religious issues--a trend which had developed in 1882, but was interrupted by the 1885 election. The Catholic Liberal Party was officially dissolved, as its remnants joined either the government or the Whiteway Opposition.<sup>59</sup> The latter fervently promised railway development, and conducted an election campaign against the mercantile government designed specifically to appeal to the class prejudices of a majority of the population. Whiteway, the "Friend of the Workingman," also promised to substantially increase wages.<sup>60</sup> In St. John's, the Whiteway candidates were led by two young Catholic lawyers--T.J. Murphy and E.P. Morris--whose electoral support depended upon the workingman's vote. Their chief opponents were three former Liberal MHA's--J.J. Callahan, M.J. O'Mara, and P.J. Scott, and Councillor St. John, whose candidacies were strongly endorsed by the Catholic Church.<sup>61</sup> With the aid of the secret ballot--the first time it was used in a colonial election--and a broadened franchise which included all males over twenty-five years, the Opposition won the

<sup>59</sup>Daily Colonist, October 8, 1889.

<sup>60</sup>Hiller, "A History," pp. 185-186.

<sup>61</sup>O'Brien to Knutsford, conf., November 18, 1889, C.O.194/212, pt 344.

election with 29 out of 36 seats, including the 6 from the St. John's districts.<sup>62</sup> (See Table 2).

During the campaign, all the St. John's candidates admitted the inadequacy of the Municipal Act, and, to court the newly enfranchised, promised to have it amended at the next legislative session. O'Mara told voters that the government would amend the Act "in a manner to please the citizens generally . . . ."<sup>63</sup> Another government candidate said that Opposition criticisms of the Council were unwarranted, and stated that it had provided many worthwhile municipal improvements. In any case, Callanan considered the Council "an improvement upon the regime of the Beard of Works . . . ."<sup>64</sup> While its city candidates extolled the virtues of local city government--albeit inadequate--the government's outport candidates declared to their constituents that the Thorburn Government had finally relieved outport people of the financial burden of having to pay for civic improvements in St. John's.<sup>65</sup>

The Opposition was more specific with its promises--full incorporation,<sup>66</sup> and called the existing Council a

<sup>62</sup> Miller, "A History," p. 185.

<sup>63</sup> Evening Mercury, October 15, 1889.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., October 19, 1889.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., July 24, 1889.

<sup>66</sup> Daily Colonist, February 5, 1890.

TABLE 2

## ST. JOHN'S EAST AND WEST ELECTION RESULTS, 1889

District	Candidates					
	Name	Political Affiliation	Age	Religion	Occupation	Votes Polled
St. John's East	T.J. Murphy	Whitewayite	28	Roman Catholic	Lawyer	1,747
	J.J. Dearin	Whitewayite	71	Roman Catholic	Druggist	1,716
	J. Halleran	Whitewayite	?	Roman Catholic	Builder	1,469
	M.J. O'Mara	Reform	?	Roman Catholic	Lawyer	854
	L.O.B. Furlong	Reform	33	Roman Catholic	Commission merchant	819
	F. St. John	Reform	37	Roman Catholic	Baker	609
St. John's West	R.J. Parsons	Independent	?	Presbyterian (?)	Lawyer	233
	E.P. Morris	Whitewayite	30	Roman Catholic	Lawyer	1,556
	J. Day	Whitewayite	?	Roman Catholic	?	1,326
	L.J. Geran	Whitewayite	?	Roman Catholic	Merchant	1,054
	P.J. Scott	Reform	41	Roman Catholic	Lawyer	957
	J.J. Callanan	Reform	47	Roman Catholic	Grocer	741
	J.P. Shea	Independent	?	Roman Catholic	Grocer (?)	137
	P.J. Brien	Independent	?	Roman Catholic	Printer	117

Source: Evening Mercury, Evening Telegram, November 8, 9, 1889.



"Government Department."<sup>67</sup> These candidates reminded the voters of the treatment the government had given the 1889 petition, an "insult that is not forgotten in St. John's, and will be remembered on polling day."<sup>68</sup>

The Whiteway Government was therefore committed to municipal reform in the 1890 session. Several Executive members such as Robert Bond<sup>69</sup> and H.J.B. Woods<sup>70</sup> had publicly supported the 1889 petition, while four Citizens' Defence Association members--L.J. Geran, W.H. Whiteley, James Murray, and T.J. Murphy--were now MHA's. All were Whiteway supporters except Murray (Burgeo-LaPoile) who was an independent, but an acknowledged sympathizer. The Daily Colonist confidently wrote that there "should not be the least doubt that [the 1889 amendments] could be successfully carried through the Assembly, if brought up . . . [making] St. John's a free city with an enfranchised population."<sup>71</sup> The government, however, in early 1890 was

<sup>67</sup> E.P. Morris, speaking at a political rally, October 11, 1889, Evening Telegram, October 14, 1889.

<sup>68</sup> See, for instance, Evening Telegram, September 24, October 9, 12, 14, 17, 19, 1889.

<sup>69</sup> Robert Bond, 1857-1927: MHA Trinity 1882-1885; Fortune 1885-1889; Trinity 1889-1894; Twillingate 1895-1914; Speaker 1885; Colonial Secretary 1889-1894, 1895-1897; Leader Liberal Opposition 1897-1900; Premier 1900-1909.

<sup>70</sup> Henry J.B. Woods, 1842-1916: Merchant; MHA Bay de Verde 1889-1897; Surveyor General 1889-1893, 1895-1897.

<sup>71</sup> Daily Colonist, February 5, 1890.

more concerned with removing Thorburn supporters from public office, including the Municipal Council appointees, than with municipal reform.

One of the Thorburn appointees, James V. Fox, left in early 1890 the position of municipal councillor and its annual salary of approximately \$150, for that of Legislative Councillor and several other public positions--positions which would bring him a direct income of not less than \$1,200 annually.<sup>72</sup> These appointments evidently resulted from Morris's influence, who had gained Fox's political support and who now was vying with Bond for the leadership of the Liberal Party (the renamed Whiteway Party) after Whiteway retired from politics.<sup>73</sup> Members of the late Thorburn Government, now reconstituted under the label the 'Patriotic Association' (or Tory Party) and led by A.B. Morine<sup>74</sup> and Moses Monroe, were obviously displeased with the defection of one of their own, and the Evening Herald

<sup>72</sup> Evening Herald, January 22, 1890.

<sup>73</sup> See Noel, Politics in Newfoundland, pp. 32-33, for an account of the political rivalry between Bond and Morris.

<sup>74</sup> Alfred B. Morine, 1857-1944; Lawyer; Editor, St. John's Evening Mercury, 1883-1885; Evening Herald, 1889-1891; MHA Bonavista, 1886-1906, 1914-1919; Colonial Secretary, 1894; Minister of Marine and Fisheries; and of Finance, 1897-1900; Chairman, Canadian Public Service Commission, 1911-1912; Minister of Justice, 1919; Executive Counsellor and MLC, 1924-1928.

carried a scathing review of Fox's brief but so far eventful political career:

What are the peculiar claims of Fox upon the 'Whiteway Party' is a question often asked. He was not publicly known prior to the general election as a supporter of the Whiteway Party and he seems to have become such when he saw how 'the cat would jump'. It was the Thorburn Government which appointed James Fox to a directorship of the General Water Company, and subsequently to a seat in the Municipal Council. He received his business training in Sir Robert Thorburn's office, and pretended almost to the very eve of the general election to be a Thorburnite.

The other appointee, James Goodfellow, was less promising and refused to resign despite Liberal demands that he do so. The Evening Telegram, for instance, reported rumours of mismanagement by Goodfellow and Monroe who, it said, ran the Council in the "Tammany Ring style" and demanded Goodfellow's resignation, because he had been

identified with the Thorburn Party and some of its hottest partisans. But this is a matter of taste; some people would do so at once; others have to be invited to resign.

The Liberals argued that the Council had been politicized when it was first created because of the Executive's right to appoint two members, and thus the Government now claimed the right to replace its opponents by representatives of the colony's "enlightened and patriotic government" to make the Council "a popular institution", and one that would

<sup>75</sup> Evening Herald, January 22, 1890.

<sup>76</sup> Evening Telegram, February 24, 26, 1890.

ensure "avoiding bankruptcy in the near future".<sup>77</sup>

This press warfare was also manifested within the Council. At its February 27 meeting, Morison moved a resolution condemning the Evening Telegram's February 26 article criticizing Monroe. Power, a Morris Liberal, opposed Morison, because the resolution would create a dangerous precedent, he claimed, involving the Council in the colony's partisan politics, resulting in only "endless argument and ill-feeling [with] no practical benefit whatever." Moreover, he threatened to move his own resolution censoring the Evening Herald for its attacks on several councillors if Morison's were accepted. Power's argument prevailed, and the motion was dropped.<sup>78</sup>

Despite its election pledge, the Whiteway Government had not brought in any legislation by the middle of the session to fully incorporate St. John's. Municipal affairs were not discussed until April 30 when Council's accounts and estimates, including proposals for increased taxation, were presented for debate by Morris. These proposals included an increased coal duty, and taxes on horses, carts, carriages, absentee landlords' property, resident and non-resident auctioneers, and non-resident Life Insurance

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., February 26, 1890.

<sup>78</sup> Proceedings of the St. John's Municipal Council February 27, 1890, as reported in Evening Telegram, February 28, 1890.

Agents, and assessments on 'vacant' lands and all houses within city limits not paying water and sewerage rates. This increased revenue was necessary to enable the Council to balance its budget during 1890.<sup>79</sup>

Morris was displeased with these accounts, with a \$57,488.20 deficit for the first fifteen months of operations, and a projected 1890 deficit of \$17,487.58. He said that the government believed both the late Thorburn Government and the Municipal Council had illegally spent public funds in 1888 and 1889, particularly regarding street improvements, and asked the House to appoint a Select Committee to examine municipal finances, and to inquire if the tax proposals were justified. He acknowledged that the Municipal Act needed amendment, and hoped that this could be done during the 1890 session:

... but should they fail in so doing, his constituents could rest assured they would receive the attention of the Legislature on the first days of the next session. They need not fear that they would be treated as the petitioners were treated last session, by having their petition kicked out. The desire of the Government was to give St. John's a good liberal franchise and a municipal bill which would, he hoped, lessen taxation, and avoid the necessity of yearly reform. . . .<sup>80</sup>

<sup>79</sup> James Goodfellow to Robert Bond, April 3, 1890; JHA, 1890, Appendix, P. 305.

<sup>80</sup> Morris in Assembly Debates, April 30, 1890, in Evening Telegram, May 12, 13, 1890; and Daily Colonist May 17, 1890.

Other government members, and James Murray, were very outspoken, charging the Council with financial mismanagement and corruption, and with helping the late Thorburn Government in the election.<sup>81</sup>

The Select Committee, chaired by Morris, consisted entirely of government members, with the exception of Murray. Most of its members had previously expressed public statements and opinions which would prejudice municipal mismanagement as politically-motivated. It was this Committee that the Evening Telegram hoped would dethrone the "Boodlers" from their "dishonest" domination of the Municipal Council.<sup>82</sup> The Tories, not unexpectedly, regarded its appointment as a government attempt to introduce "their feelings of political spite and rancour into municipal affairs," and stated the Council would be most "eager to vindicate itself from the attacks made upon its honor."<sup>83</sup>

The Committee's appointment provided the government with an occasion for dismissing Goodfellow from the Council. Previously, it had been reluctant to dismiss him, because it would obviously appear as if the government really had no intention to eliminate the two appointees on the

<sup>81</sup> Evening Telegram, May 2, 3, 1890.

<sup>82</sup> Evening Telegram, May 1, 1890. Committee members were E.P. Morris (Chairman), J. Halberan, L.J. Geran, J.S. Tait, W.V. Whitway, and James Murray.

<sup>83</sup> Evening Herald, May 6, 1890.

Council. Appointed to replace Fox and Goodfellow, were two Liberal supporters, John Harris and George Knowling.<sup>84</sup>

The Select Committee reported on June 5. It found first that the Accountant had, on the Chairman's orders, deliberately made false entries in the Council's annual balance sheet for 1889 showing a deficiency of \$57,488.20 instead of the true figure of \$27,488.20. Second, the Council had spent \$11,975.08 from March 21 to December 31, 1889, to purchase land for street widening. The Committee said this expenditure was illegal because under Section 60 of the Municipal Act, the Council had to have a balanced budget, and could not incur any extra indebtedness without legislative approval. The 1889 estimates had not contained any provision for this expenditure. Third, the Thorburn Government had spent \$39,554.80 for street widening and improvements between March and December, 1888, and issued debentures for that sum under the St. John's Rebuilding Act. This was illegal, because under Section 31 of the Municipal Act, it had transferred all of its powers under the Rebuilding Act to the Council.<sup>85</sup> The Committee did not recommend legal action against former members of the Thorburn Government nor against any of the municipal councillors.

<sup>84</sup>Appendix B

<sup>85</sup>Report of the Select Committee of the Assembly, JHA, 1890, Appendix, pp. 306-308; Morris in Debates, June 5, 1890, in Evening Telegram, June 18, 1890.

The Whiteway Government was satisfied just to have straightened out municipal finances, and rid the Council of a Thorburnite majority who were "mixing it up with party politics, and making it an instrument of party purposes"

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The Committee did make several recommendations concerning municipal finances. First, it stated Council's 1890 expenditures should be reduced, and suggested this be done mainly by reducing salaries. Second, the Council should not be permitted to spend any more money on widening and improving the streets without the express authority of the Legislature. Third, any further municipal expenditures on street widening, including compensation for the removal of private buildings, should be stopped so that the Council could attain a balanced budget. Fourth, it proposed several new taxes.

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On the basis of this report, the government amended the 1888 Municipal Act, empowering both branches of the Legislature to alter or disallow Council's annual estimates of its revenues and expenditures, and by resolution of both Houses to legislate alternate means.<sup>88</sup> It then passed a

<sup>86</sup> Evening Telegram, June 12, 1890.

<sup>87</sup> "Report of the Select Committee of the Assembly," VIII, 1890, Appendix, pp. 307-311.

<sup>88</sup> 53 Victoria, Cap. 8.



resolution accepting the Select Committee's proposals for increased taxation. These included licenses on resident auctioneers; fire and insurance companies; non-resident vendors; and on horses, both those for private use and commercial use by cabmen. Absentee landlords were taxed 2 1/2 per cent on their rented property--the Council had proposed 5--while a 3 per cent tax was imposed on those houses within city limits with an annual rental value over \$30 and not already paying water and sewerage rates.<sup>89</sup> The government confidently hoped this would enable the Council to balance its budget.<sup>90</sup>

During the Assembly debate on the Council's accounts, it became obvious that the Executive was not united in its approach to the municipal system. Morris, the 'senior member for St. John's', "thoroughly believed in municipal government" and considered the "present council, . . . far superior to the Board of Works, and little blame could attach to them if they had not violated the spirit and letter of the law in expending over and above their estimated revenue . . ."<sup>91</sup> The Premier, however, preferred

<sup>89</sup> JHA, 1890, June 10, 1890; St. John's Municipal Council Public Notice, dated July 4, 1890, and published in Evening Telegram, July 4, 1890.

<sup>90</sup> Morris in Assembly Debates, June 5, 1890, in Evening Telegram, June 18, 1890.

<sup>91</sup> Morris in Assembly Debates, April 30, 1890, in Evening Telegram, May 13, 1890.

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the control of municipal affairs by the Board of Works "under which the affairs of the public were much better, and more cheaply conducted . . . ." <sup>92</sup> This difference of opinion showed that the only way St. John's could obtain full incorporation would be if enough citizens interested themselves in civic affairs to demand it. The government did not bring in the legislation during the 1890 session, claiming that "unfortunately, press of business had made it necessary to postpone this question . . . ." but reassured citizens that "in the next session, a thoroughly satisfactory measure will be brought in . . . ." <sup>93</sup> It also became clear that despite its apparent disapproval of government interference in municipal affairs, the Whiteway Government, particularly E.P. Morris, was more than willing to use the Council for political ends. This was shown in a by-election later in that year, resulting from the death of J.J. Dearin in late July.

This by-election witnessed an attempt by Morris to extend and consolidate his political influence in the East End. He had practically total freedom to manage the election campaign, since both Whiteway and Bond were absent from

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<sup>92</sup> Whiteway in Assembly Debates, June 5, 1890, in Evening Telegram, June 19, 1890.

<sup>93</sup> Evening Telegram, June 12, 1890.

the colony.<sup>94</sup> Morris's disposal of government patronage included municipal employment at Bannerman Park at a dollar a day--a wage twenty cents higher than that of other labourers in the city, and promises of work on the railway. The government candidate was Morris's protégé, James Fox, while the Tory opponent was P.J. Scott, an ex-St. John's West MHA. One of their many promises, if elected, was to aggressively pursue full incorporation for the city,<sup>95</sup> Scott was very critical of the government for having "converted the government of the town into a purely political agency for the promotion of their party promises and interests," and criticized it for taking away from the people of St. John's the right to impose their own taxation, and giving it to the outport MHA's under the 1890 Municipal Act.<sup>96</sup> The Liberals reiterated their pledge to introduce a bill "placing the control and management of the affairs of the town in the hands of the rate-payers, and that every man who pays a tax, be that ever so little, will have a vote in the election of the city councillors . . . ."<sup>97</sup>

<sup>94</sup> Whiteway was in London involved in discussing with the English Government the colony's dispute with France over the fishery on its 'French Shore', while Bond was in the United States negotiating reciprocity with the Americans, Hiller, "A History," pp. 197-223.

<sup>95</sup> Daily Colonist, September 23, Evening Herald, October 23, 1890.

<sup>96</sup> Evening Herald, October 2, 23, 1890.

<sup>97</sup> Evening Telegram, October 27, 1890.

The Liberals, with the assistance of Morris's popularity among the working class and generous government patronage, won the bitterly contested election--the Evening Telegram even urged the unorganized labourers to form unions and strike against the merchants in order to receive wage parity with the municipal employees.<sup>98</sup>

The Liberal victory symbolized Morris's dominance of city politics and municipal affairs. Morris, the son of a city labourer, had won the hearts and votes of the working class by championing legislation improving their working and living conditions, but was much resented by the mercantile class. Their opposition only reinforced Morris's image as a 'workingman's candidate'.<sup>99</sup> An astute political opportunist, Morris unscrupulously used the Council and the colonial government--as a long-time adversary later said, for "paying his friends and downing an enemy."<sup>100</sup> Morris favoured a 'good, liberal franchise' because it meant giving the vote to the working class, many of whom would vote for Morris candidates and the prospect of employment from the Council. His only opponents in municipal politics--Monroe's, Tories--were also his opposition in colonial

<sup>98</sup> Evening Telegram, September 9, November 8, 1890. Fox defeated Scott 1,806 to 1,463.

<sup>99</sup> Neary and Noel, "Continuity and Change," pp. 21-22.

<sup>100</sup> Morine in Assembly Debates, April 11, 1902, in Evening Telegram, May 10, 1902.

politics, with the citizens as passive spectators. The pleas of the Daily Colonist for greater civic interest generally went unnoticed.<sup>101</sup>

The Whiteway Government appointed another Select Committee in the 1891 session to consider and report upon the municipal affairs of St. John's.<sup>102</sup> The Opposition opposed this appointment, demanding, instead, that the government bring in legislation based upon the 1889 petition which, they claimed, generally represented public opinion on municipal reform.<sup>103</sup> Morris was not immediately anxious to do so, because the government was awaiting correspondence from the Colonial Office on whether the 1890 Municipal Act would be disallowed. Although the Governor had assented to the Act, agents of absentee landlords in Newfoundland had petitioned the Colonial Office to disallow the Act. The petitioners had objected to the 3½ per cent charge on non-resident property in St. John's, which the Municipal Council had been authorized to collect by a resolution of the Legislature. They argued that this tax was contrary to the seventeenth article of the 1876 Letters Patent, which prohibited the colonial legislature from passing any

<sup>101</sup> For instance, Daily Colonist, February 26, 1890.

<sup>102</sup> JHA, 1891, February 26, 1891.

<sup>103</sup> Morine in Assembly Debates, February 26, 1891, in Evening Telegram, March 6, 1891; Evening Herald, February 27, 1891.

legislation prejudicing "the rights and property of our subjects not residing in [Newfoundland]." <sup>104</sup> The Act was disallowed, but for different reasons. The Colonial Office's law officers declared it unconstitutional because it gave both branches of the Legislature authority to impose taxation without the concurrence of the Governor. <sup>105</sup> The government was not officially notified of this disallowance until late March, and did not make the decision public until April 28 in the Assembly. <sup>106</sup> This delay, evidently was intentional, and designed to prevent any public criticism of the government before the introduction of its new municipal bill on April 20. <sup>107</sup>

Though generally regarded as government legislation, Morris claimed personal responsibility for the bill which was based upon the 1889 Citizens' Defence Association petition. <sup>108</sup> The only critical differences between that

<sup>104</sup> "Petition of Absentee Landlords Agents," enclosure in O'Brien to Knutsford, June 24, 1890, C.O. 194/215, pp. 86-89.

<sup>105</sup> Colonial Office to O'Brien, March 21, 1891, despatch No. 24, in GN1/2, Governor's Office, Despatches from Colonial Office, 1891 (located at Newfoundland Archives).

<sup>106</sup> Assembly Debates, April 28, 1891, in Evening Telegram, May 16, 1891.

<sup>107</sup> JHA, 1891, April 20, 1891.

<sup>108</sup> Morris in Assembly Debates, April 28 and May 14, 1891, in Evening Telegram, May 16 and 27, 1891, respectively.

petition and the bill affected the Council's membership and franchise. The latter proposed increasing the elective representation from five to ten, with the colonial government still retaining its two appointees. The government stated that it would withdraw its right to have representation, once the citizens were ready to assume the municipal debt. This was a dubious concession, however, since the government would only grant full incorporation if the Water Street merchants, who in general opposed it,<sup>109</sup> favoured such a measure. The government wanted to give the franchise to any British subject<sup>110</sup> over twenty-one years who was either a householder or a taxpayer. Moreover, the Council was to be given new sources of revenues, which included a business tax on all commercial and financial establishments and private utilities in the city, but there was no provision for a poll tax. The Council was also to be given authority to make any necessary rules and regulations governing its affairs, subject to the approval of the

<sup>109</sup> Morris in Assembly Debates, February 27, 1914, Proceedings of the Newfoundland House of Assembly and Legislative Council, 1914, pp. 693-694.

<sup>110</sup> "British subject" would imply that the government proposed giving the franchise to women who held the required qualifications, but it is not known if this was indeed the government's intention. Nevertheless, the phrase "British subject" was later changed to read in the 1891 Act, "male British subject." At this time, women already had the right to vote in Halifax if they held certain property qualifications. See Daily Colonist, May 11, 16, 1891.

Governor-in-Council.<sup>111</sup> This bill was in fact a government compromise with its election promises; it did not give the citizens full incorporation, but their representation would be increased and the franchise broadened.

The extra revenue was necessary to enable Council to balance its budget, and to pay to the colonial government the interest on a \$153,069.54 loan the government proposed raising to subsidize water and sewer extensions, and to consolidate Council's deficits for 1889 and 1890.<sup>112</sup> The 1890 deficit of \$7,423.89 had resulted from Council's inability, because of legal loop-holes in its by-laws, to collect some of the taxation the government had authorized it to impose.<sup>113</sup> The government hoped, then, that the bill would put the Council on a sound financial and administrative basis, and prevent the exigency, Morris said, of the "Legislature being called upon every session, to enact some law or place some tax . . . in connection with the municipality."<sup>114</sup>

<sup>111</sup>The Municipal Bill was published in Daily Colonist, May 4, 1891.

<sup>112</sup>Assembly Debates, May 7, 1891, in Evening Telegram, May 25, 1891.

<sup>113</sup>Ibid.; Evening Mercury, September 24, 1890; Proceedings of the St. John's Municipal Council, July 3, 1891, as reported in Daily Colonist, July 4, 1891; and "Select Committee Report on Municipal Council Accounts for 1890," published in Daily Colonist, May 8, 1891.

<sup>114</sup>Morris in Assembly Debates, April 25, 1891, in Evening Telegram, May 14, 1891.



The Opposition criticized the bill because it was unsuited to the needs of the city, claiming that it is "the copy of one of the largest cities in England or America." The Evening Herald castigated the government for not consulting the citizens with the bill, and for not having it published and circulated before its presentation in the House.<sup>115</sup>

The bill's most vocal opponent was the economically-minded James Murray, who objected strongly to the section increasing the Council's membership which he considered to be unnecessary. He took his opposition to the bill outside the Assembly,<sup>116</sup> and, assisted by some Liberal supporters, convened a rate-payers' meeting on May 1. W.H. Whiteley chaired the meeting, claiming the right to do so because he had been the Association's chairman two years previously when the petition, which now formed the basis of the bill, was presented.<sup>117</sup> This meeting was attended by both Liberals and Tories, who were at times more interested with verbal abuse of each other than with debating the

<sup>115</sup> Evening Herald, April 28, 1891.

<sup>116</sup> Murray in Assembly Debates, April 24, 1891, in Evening Telegram, May 11, 1891; see Murray's letters to the Daily Colonist, April 29, 1891, and Evening Telegram, April 30, 1891, calling for a public meeting to discuss the municipal bill.

<sup>117</sup> Daily Colonist, May 2, 1891.

municipal bill.<sup>118</sup> The bill was, nevertheless, discussed and a committee--representative of the community's political and economic groups--appointed to consider any necessary amendments which should be made and to discuss them with Morris, before reporting to another public meeting.<sup>119</sup> The committee drafted several amendments. Most of them were adopted at a meeting on May 11 and then presented to Morris for inclusion in the bill. It is not known what all these amendments were, but one was the extension of the vote to all males over twenty-one years who paid a poll tax.<sup>120</sup> Another amendment appears to have been the removal of the proposed business tax, as far as it affected such establishments as hotels, taverns, distilleries, and manufactories.<sup>121</sup> The committee also

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., May 5, 1891.

<sup>119</sup> The committee consisted of P. Brazil; John Brownling (Tory, biscuit manufacturer); P.R. Bowers (editor, Daily Colonist); F.W. Bowden (printer, proprietor, sewing machine store); John Cowan (Tory, merchant); J.L. Duchemin (Liberal, member of Board of Works); E. English (Liberal, examiner of harbour masters and mates); Maurice Penelon (Tory, bookstore owner); Campbell Macpherson (Tory, merchant); and John McDougall (Tory, merchant). Macpherson was the committee's chairman, Bowers its secretary. Daily Colonist, May 2, 12, 1891.

<sup>120</sup> Daily Colonist, May 12, 19, 1891; Morris in Assembly Debates, May 18, 1891, in Evening Telegram, May 27, 1891.

<sup>121</sup> Since the original section concerning the business tax was discussed in neither House of the Legislature, and was not incorporated in the Act, it can be assumed, then, that this was one of the amendments the committee suggested to Morris.

supported the bill's section increasing the Council's membership.<sup>122</sup> This section proved to be the most critical among the MHA's.

The St. John's MHA's were divided over this section, and many of them, including Morris, supported the section only because their constituents wanted it.<sup>123</sup> Murray, who was opposed to the increase even though the rate-payers supported it,<sup>124</sup> moved an amendment stating that Council's total membership should be maintained at seven. This motion was carried with the support of outport MHA's who equated additional membership with increased municipal expenditures, higher taxes, and an increased municipal debt.<sup>125</sup> The House passed the poll tax clause,<sup>126</sup> but defeated the amendment making members of the legislature ineligible to be municipal councillors, arguing that the House had no right to deny the voters whom they wished to elect.<sup>127</sup> Another amendment in

<sup>122</sup> Morris in Assembly Debates, May 18, 1891, in Evening Telegram, May 27, 1891.

<sup>123</sup> Assembly Debates, May 14, 18, 1891, in Evening Telegram, May 26, 27, 1891.

<sup>124</sup> Murray in Assembly Debates, May 18, 1891, in Evening Telegram, May 27, 1891.

<sup>125</sup> Assembly Debates, May 14, 18, 1891, in Evening Telegram, May 26, 27, 1891.

<sup>126</sup> Daily Colonist, May 19, 1891.

<sup>127</sup> T. J. Murphy in Assembly Debates, May 18, 1891, in Evening Telegram, May 28, 1891.

the bill proposed to change the name of the presiding officer of the Council from chairman to 'mayor', a change reflecting the "advancing growth" of the city. Halleran (St. John's East) suggested that this amendment be altered giving the rate-payers the right to elect the mayor. This was a method often advocated by Bowers in the Daily Colonist.<sup>128</sup> Morris disagreed with Halleran commenting that the present change was adequate--a system which was similar with the

manner of election for the President of the United States [which] was conducted by a select body, the electoral college, and the system that worked satisfactorily with them should also be advantageous with us.<sup>129</sup>

Despite Morris's objections, Halleran's amendment was accepted.<sup>130</sup>

The Legislative Council readily passed the bill with a few amendments. First, the councillors, opposed to such a liberal franchise, removed the poll tax clause from the voter qualifications, and second, the Municipal Council, and not the rate-payers would elect the chairman, and the name change to mayor was removed.<sup>131</sup> These changes were

<sup>128</sup> Daily Colonist, May 19, 1891.

<sup>129</sup> Morris, in Assembly Debates, May 18, 1891, in Evening Telegram, May 28, 1891.

<sup>130</sup> Assembly Debates, May 18, 1891, in Evening Telegram, May 28, 1891.

<sup>131</sup> Assembly Debates, May 28, 1891, in Evening Telegram, May 29, 1891.

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evidently made in response to a petition presented to the Legislative Council from large property owners who desired that the bill, or at least some of its sections, be deferred until the next session.<sup>132</sup>

The Assembly, fearing the defeat of the entire bill, accepted these amendments. Morris justified the government's position with the argument that "half a loaf was better than no bread."<sup>133</sup> Nevertheless, Morris's behavior exhibited a political pragmatism characteristic of his approach towards municipal affairs. He championed a 'liberal franchise' because that was what the citizens generally wanted. Furthermore, the newly enfranchised, he undoubtedly assumed, would vote for his supporters in the municipal election which was to be held in December, 1892. Morris knew that no matter how liberal the voter qualifications he proposed, the Legislative Council could certainly amend them to protect the interests of the property owners.

Yet Morris's control of the Municipal Council was obviously resented by the Opposition, which actively urged citizens not to pay the license fees the 1891 Municipal Act authorized the Council to collect. The Tories said that

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<sup>132</sup> JLC, 1891, May 27, 1891.

<sup>133</sup> Morris in Assembly Debates, May 28, 1891, in Evening Telegram, May 29, 1891.

the Act and the by-laws issued by the Council were ambiguous and contained loop-holes enabling citizens to circumvent the payment of their taxes. Council's right to license cabmen was successfully challenged in the courts by James Winter as counsel for several cabmen.<sup>134</sup> Because of this faulty legislation, the Council was unable to collect a large part of its revenues for that year leaving a debit balance of \$17,308.02. In addition, the Council had an outstanding legal account for 1890 and 1891 of \$1,000.<sup>135</sup> The Opposition attempted to present to the public a view of municipal affairs with the Council as "one big machine, worked by means of unlimited 'boodle' and corruption for the political and party ends and purposes of the government, and especially of the members for St. John's . . ."<sup>136</sup> It is against this background of partisan politics that the citizens would have, in the forthcoming municipal election, to pass judgement upon the success or failure of the Council and whether or not incorporation was better than the Board of Works' management of

<sup>134</sup> Proceedings of the St. John's Police Court, August 19, 1891, as reported in Evening Herald, August 19, 1891.

<sup>135</sup> Thomas Mitchell to Robert Bond, April 26, 1892, in Bills of the House of Assembly, 1892, pp. 60-62.

<sup>136</sup> Evening Herald, August 20, 1891.

civic affairs.

Both political parties emphasized the need for prominent citizens to run for municipal office, noting that only "men of independent means and sufficient spare time to admit of careful attention to the duties of their offices" should be candidates.<sup>137</sup> The Evening Herald suggested that such candidates should have "well-known business ability . . . well posted in finance . . ." but such men were, however, unwilling to "run the chance of defeat and are loathe to give up their time to city affairs which they honestly feel they would have to do."<sup>138</sup> Similarly, the Evening Telegram urged the election of "fit and proper persons."<sup>139</sup>

None of the city's leading merchants ran in the election. Instead, most candidates were connected with the two political parties (see Table 3). Only three councillors ran for re-election--Carnell, St. John, and Power. Monroe refused to run again apparently because of his many business activities, while Morison retired due to ill health. Two candidates, Michael Tobin and P.J. Brien, in wards four and five respectively, had run unsuccessfully in the 1886 election, while James Goodfellow in ward three had once been a government appointee and the Council's

<sup>137</sup> Evening Telegram, December 23, 1871.

<sup>138</sup> Evening Herald, November 20, 1891.

<sup>139</sup> Evening Telegram, October 1, 1891.

TABLE 3

## ST. JOHN'S 1892 MUNICIPAL ELECTION RESULTS

Ward	Candidates				
	Name	Political Affiliation	Religion	Occupation	Votes Polled
1	John Curran	?	?	?	100
	Thomas Murphy	?	Roman Catholic	Retired civil servant (?)	99
2	John T. Carnell	Liberal	Anglican	Carriage builder	407
	J. T. Southcott Jr.	Tory	Anglican	Builder	227
	John W. Foran	?	?	Commission merchant	135
3	F. St. John	Tory	Roman Catholic	Baker	209
	John B. Curran	?	?	Merchant	121
4	James Goodfellow	Tory	Presbyterian	Merchant	257
	John J. Purcell	?	?	Contractor-builder	158
5	Michael Power	Liberal	Roman Catholic	Master cooper	350
	Michael Tobin	Tory	Roman Catholic	Licensed publican	322
5	Donald Morison	Tory	Presbyterian	Bawyer	366
	P. J. Brien	Liberal	Roman Catholic	Printer	265

Source: Evening Herald, January 25, 1892.



first chairman, until his removal by the Whiteway Government in 1890. The remainder were novices to municipal politics. All candidates promised the electorate municipal reform, civic improvements, and strict economy in municipal finances. The Daily Colonist was the only newspaper to give comprehensive coverage to all candidates, whereas the other dailies contained articles endorsing the candidates of their respective parties.

Only Carnell and Power were re-elected, while St. John was defeated by J.T. Southcott, Jr., in ward two. All three were elected because of their popularity, but Carnell's and Power's victories probably had been aided by government patronage. In addition, Power, in ward four, had the support of the temperance movement, since his opponent was a licensed publican.<sup>140</sup> Similarly, Donald Morison, the son of a former councillor and a temperance leader,<sup>141</sup> was elected in ward five, probably because of the strong economic influence exerted in that ward by Moses Monroe and other merchants. The fifth elected was Goodfellow, who defeated two independents. The Tories considered his victory a rebuttal to the Liberals for his dismissal as Council Chairman, whereas, the government asserted that the ward was a Tory stronghold, with all

<sup>140</sup> Evening Herald, January 28, 1892.

<sup>141</sup> Daily Colonist, September 18, 1891.

the southside of Water Street asking their employees to vote for Goodfellow.<sup>142</sup>

The municipal system set up in 1888 was a creation of the colonial government, and it was never intended that the Council should have any genuine independence. There were, nonetheless, some citizens, many of whom had resisted the Thorburn Government's attempts in 1887 and 1888 to impose a commercially-oriented municipal system on the city, who wanted to keep partisan politics out of municipal affairs by having the Council completely autonomous from the colonial government. Supported by opponents of the government, municipal reform soon became a political issue, and in the 1889 general election, the Whiteway candidates for St. John's were able to use the government's conservative attitude towards municipal affairs and the defeat of the 1889 petition as one example of the anti-labour policies of the government. This contrasted with Whiteway's 'Workingman's Party' which promised full incorporation and a broadening of the municipal franchise to include the working class.

But having been elected, the Liberal Government did not fulfill its promise of full incorporation. After assuming office, the Liberals proceeded to remove their political opponents and replace them with their own supporters--including the two government appointees on the

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<sup>142</sup> Evening Herald, Evening Telegram, January 27, 1892.

Municipal Council. In the 1890 session, the only action the government took on municipal affairs was to order a Select Committee investigation into the accounts of the Council in light of allegations that the Tory councillors had mismanaged the accounts. The Committee's Report indeed showed that mismanagement had occurred, and recommended to the Legislature measures that would give that body even greater control over finances. Claiming that it had insufficient time in the session to improve the 1888 Municipal Act, the government promised to give the citizens whatever changes they wanted in the Act in the next session. Such promises were obviously insincere since several Executive members, in particular Whiteway and Morris, radically differed as to what form the municipal system should be. Moreover, the government had very little respect for the independence of the existing system. If it did, then it should have appointed political independents instead of its own supporters to the Council after Goodfellow had resigned. That it did not, indicated that the Liberals had no genuine interest in securing a nonpartisan municipal system, and their intention to use the Council politically was clearly demonstrated in the 1890 St. John's East-by-election.

The government, in 1891, introduced a bill giving the citizens their long-promised municipal reform. The franchise was extended, and the Council was given additional

powers of taxation and authority to govern its administration. The government also stated it would be willing to remove its appointees once the Council consented to assume liability for its debt. But the possibility of the Council doing so was unlikely as long as the business community in general were opposed to full incorporation. The Council remained, then, neither completely independent of the colonial government, nor totally responsible to its citizens.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL AND 'THE GREAT FIRE OF 1892'

The newly elected councillors assumed office on February 26 and elected their chairman for the forthcoming year. Like its predecessor, this Council consisted of political representatives. The Tories included Southcott, Goodfellow, and Morison, while Carnell, Power, and the two government nominees--Edward W. Bennett, Jr., and Thomas Mitchell--<sup>1</sup> constituted the Liberals. Bowers of the Daily Colonist reported that there was considerable speculation as to who would be elected chairman, since Goodfellow, the first municipal chairman, was the tacit nominee of the Tory Opposition, while Power, also a former chairman, was a strong Morris and government supporter.<sup>2</sup> The Tories did not, however, nominate Goodfellow, but Mitchell who was the weaker government supporter. The Liberals, surprised by this tactic, still nominated Power. The result was a Tory victory, as Mitchell--an avowed advocate of full incorporation and an independent conservative in municipal affairs--voted for himself.<sup>3</sup> Mitchell's action thus

<sup>1</sup> Appendix D.

<sup>2</sup> Daily Colonist, February 27, 1892.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

deprived the Liberals of their expected majority control of the Council. With Mitchell's election, the Tories were able to present themselves as the champions of civic rights, and the advocates of full incorporation, "free from all political interference."<sup>4</sup> Mitchell acknowledged his political benefactors by generally voting with the Tory councillors.

Some government supporters were displeased with this Tory-controlled Council, and were willing to abolish it to rid St. John's of Tory rule. The Evening Telegram reported that there was "a movement on foot to abolish the Council, and the transfer of its power to the Board of Works . . . ." That newspaper claimed costly municipal improvements and the Council's unwillingness to "curb its extravagant expenditures" were the main reasons why it should be abolished.<sup>5</sup> The Opposition press dismissed this 'movement' as a Morris plot to regain control over municipal affairs.

. . . the Morris faction desire a change to the old system, and want the town taxation to be handed over to the care of the Board of Works, so that they can manage it to their own advantage, particularly for the purpose of buying "Ned's" way into the Assembly again, about which he is now shaky.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Donald Morison to Evening Herald, April 19, 1892.

<sup>5</sup> Evening Telegram, April 11, 1892.

<sup>6</sup> Evening Herald, April 14, 1892.

The Tories asserted that any change in the municipal system should come only from the taxpayers; and if there was to be a change, then St. John's should have full incorporation.<sup>7</sup>

The Council had been elected amidst a general feeling that retrenchment was necessary, but was still expected to provide essential services. The Council hoped to do this by improving its financial and administrative position. Impetus for these measures came from Mitchell and the Tory councillors. One of the major problems facing the Council was to obtain an Act which gave it authority to collect sufficient revenues to meet 1892 expenditures. The Council proposed to dispose of the 1891 floating debt by having it consolidated with the city debt. To prevent the reoccurrence of a deficit for 1892, the Council suggested to the government additional taxation, including a ten cent increase in the coal duty and a one dollar poll tax on all male residents not already paying municipal taxation.<sup>8</sup> In addition, the Council curtailed some of its own expenditures, in particular within the Sanitary and Water Departments.<sup>9</sup> Administratively, the

<sup>7</sup> Donald Morison to Evening Herald, April 19, 1892.

<sup>8</sup> "Municipal Council Report," JHA, 1893, Appendix, p. 218; Evening Telegram, April 20, 1892.

<sup>9</sup> Daily Colonist, May 7, 1892.

Council commissioned Sir James Winter--the architect of the 1888 Municipal Act--to draft certain amendments for a consolidated act which it intended to request the government to introduce during the session.<sup>10</sup> It was generally acknowledged that such an act was necessary to clearly define the Council's authority and powers of taxation. Ironically, a week previous to his appointment, the Council had attempted to prosecute Winter for non-payment of sewerage rates under the 1891 Municipal Act. E.P. Morris was the Council's solicitor, while Winter made his own defence. Decision was in favour of Winter, but it is not known on what legal basis the ruling was made.<sup>11</sup> Winter's appointment was an obvious affront to Morris who had unsuccessfully drafted the municipal legislation in 1891.

The most critical sections of Council's Municipal Bill introduced by the Premier<sup>12</sup> were, first, an amendment restoring a property franchise, and, second, the imposition of a poll tax to provide additional revenue. This franchise would include only those taxpayers who paid rates and assessments to the Council as ground landlord, owner,

<sup>10</sup> Evening Herald, April 8, 1892.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., March 30, 1892.

<sup>12</sup> JHA, 1892, May, 1892.



leasee, or occupier of any property within city limits.<sup>13</sup>  
The change would have disenfranchised most of the working class since most were tenants not paying city taxes. The property franchise was designed to return control of municipal affairs to the middle class and property owners, and remove municipal affairs from the vagaries of colonial politics. However, this would have created a perpetual Tory Council, since the middle class generally supported the Opposition. Such a prospect was totally unacceptable to Whiteway's 'Workingman's Government', particularly Morris and Murphy. During debate on this bill, Councillor Donald Morison was the only member to defend the Council, emphasizing that St. John's should have full incorporation. The other MHA's were divided on whether to abolish the Council or increase its powers under full incorporation. They all agreed, nonetheless, that the Council's expenditures should be reduced.<sup>14</sup>

Morris and Murphy strongly opposed the franchise change because mechanics and labourers had as much right to vote as property-owners, and that even if they did not pay direct municipal taxation, they still paid indirectly.

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<sup>13</sup>"Municipal Bill," Bills of the House of Assembly, 1892, pp. 40, 60.

<sup>14</sup>Daily Colonist, May 11, 1892.

They paid a duty [said Morris] of 30 cents on coal imported into St. John's. They allowed gas and water companies to dig up and obstruct the streets which belonged to them in conjunction with the rest of the public; and this was a concession which was equivalent to a tax. In fact, every man who lived in the city paid some sort of indirect tax, and he, [Morris] would give the right to the very Bohemians of the city. There was another reason why the present law should not be changed. There was a number of people in town at present living in houses whose annual rent did not exceed \$40 a year. These people would be debarred if the section before the chair passed. As a matter of fact, they really paid water rates through their landlords, who were sure to exact extra rent when the taxes on property increased. . . . There was not a man in this House who could say that the increased vote had not been properly used, and until it was proven that it was not so, no attempt should be made to control the voting power in such elections.

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Murray and Morison alone supported the proposed restriction. The former's position was contrary to the one he had held since helping to found the Citizens' Defence Association in 1888. Murray endorsed "no representation without taxation," because he now believed the household franchise could be easily abused, and with the late municipal elections fresh in mind, favoured a property vote:

... it stood to reason that a man who had no interests at stake could not always be relied upon to give a strict conscientious vote. He would have nothing to lose by an increase in city taxes; on the contrary, as increased taxes generally

<sup>15</sup> Morris in Assembly Debates, May 8, 1892, in Evening Telegram, June 22, 1892.

meant increased labor; he would be inclined to vote for those who could squander the most money

Murray cited Council's labour practices in Bannerman Park during the 1890 St. John's East by-election--an incident Morris categorically termed a "coincidence in time"--<sup>16</sup> as one example where labourers received work in return for their electoral support of a government candidate.<sup>17</sup> Morrison defended the Municipal Council's proposal, commenting that the attitudes of the St. John's MHA's were "sentimentality and empathy for the labouring class"<sup>18</sup>

Morris moved a successful amendment restoring the original franchise, which gave the vote to all householders and taxpayers, including those paying the suggested poll tax.<sup>19</sup> The other amendments passed without too many alterations. Furthermore, the government restricted the Council from undertaking any expensive street improvements and street-widening without the

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Murray in Assembly Debates, May 18, 1892, in Evening Telegram, June 22, 1892.

<sup>18</sup> Morrison in Assembly Debates, May 18, 1892, in Evening Telegram, June 22, 1892.

<sup>19</sup> Assembly Debates, May 18, 1892, in Evening Telegram, June 22, 1892.

authority of the Governor-in-Council.<sup>20</sup> This restriction, it seems, was to prevent the Council from using such improvements as political patronage for the Opposition.

The Legislative Council passed the bill, but restored the property franchise, and eliminated the poll tax. This change represented the conservatism of the councillors. A. Harvey,<sup>21</sup> a government supporter, said that the principle of a household franchise as applied to the municipality of St. John's was a "wrong one."

It was an universally-accepted axiom that representation followed taxation, and that in municipal affairs only those who paid direct taxes should vote. The amendment to which he referred provided for the very converse of that principle. If that principle of the household suffrage should be followed, the affairs of the city would be likely, in a short time, to go out of the hands of those who should be responsible for keeping taxation within proper and reasonable limits.<sup>22</sup>

The Assembly refused to accept the Legislative Council's amendments, and requested that representatives from both Houses meet to discuss them. This conference was held on May 30, with the Council agreeing to withdraw its amendments since the government threatened to throw out the

<sup>20</sup> Proceedings of the St. John's Municipal Council, May 27, 1892, as reported in Evening Telegram, May 28, 1892.

<sup>21</sup> Augustus W. Harvey, 1839-1903; Merchant; MLC, 1870-1895; 1900-1903.

<sup>22</sup> Harvey in Legislative Council Debates, May 31, 1892, in Evening Telegram, June 25, 1892.

bill, leaving the Municipal Council with insufficient authority under the 1891 Municipal Act to collect enough revenues to balance its budget.<sup>23</sup> The government did concede, however, that the payment of a poll tax should not be a part of the franchise qualification.

The Municipal Council--paradoxically the first elected under a household franchise--was obviously displeased with the government's treatment of the bill, especially since the former had carefully studied and adopted it to meet "the requirements of the town." The Chairman wrote the government that the existing franchise would inevitably result in the

anomaly of the affairs of the town of St. John's being partially controlled by a class of voters who contribute nothing to the revenue, and who are not financially responsible for its expenditures.

Mitchell also warned the government that its refusal to grant the Council extra revenues through increased coal duties and the poll tax, without providing alternate sources, would "deprive [the Council] of satisfying the ordinary and constant requirements of the town to say nothing of much needed improvements."<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Mitchell to Bond, May 27, 1892, GN2/22, Reports and Petitions to the Colonial Secretary (located at the Newfoundland Archives).

Deprived of additional revenue, the Council was left in a very difficult financial situation with the government demanding that the Council include the 1891 floating debt in its current expenditures.<sup>25</sup> But the Council insisted this debt be consolidated, since it could not afford to carry it for 1892.<sup>26</sup> The Council had projected for 1892 sufficient revenues to maintain existing services, and to pay its interest on the debt for 1892.<sup>26</sup> This the government refused to do, and the Council was left, then, on the eve of the July 8-9 Fire in a very precarious situation with limited revenues, complicated by poor relations with the Whiteway Government. The "Great Fire of '92" only aggravated the problems of the Municipality.

This fire, wrote one contemporary chronicler, "far exceeded all former calamities in the suddenness and in the immense value of the property destroyed... ." <sup>27</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Bond to Kelly, April 29, 1892, GN2/1, Outgoing Correspondence of the Colonial Secretary's Office (located at the Newfoundland Archives); Whiteway to Mitchell, Letterbook of the Attorney General's Office, Whiteway Papers (located at the Centre for Newfoundland Studies, Memorial University).

<sup>26</sup> Mitchell to Bond, April 6, November 1, 1892, quoted in "Municipal Council Report," JHA, 1893, pp. 216-218, 220.

<sup>27</sup> Prowse, A History of Newfoundland, p. 521.

The fire originated in a stable on a hill overlooking the center of the city at about 4:30 p.m. on July 8, and aided by a strong wind, an insufficient water supply, and an unusually hot day of 85 degrees, quickly spread to other buildings in the central and eastern parts. The water shortage had developed because of the Council Chairman's decision to turn off the water in that part of the town at 9:00 a.m. to permit the water mains to be cleaned, and it was not turned on again until 3:00 p.m. Despite this, there was insufficient water in the mains at the time of the fire on this 'higher level', since it took at least three hours of running water before the pressure could be brought to this area. Even a water tank opposite the stable had not been filled by firemen who had emptied it the previous evening "when practising with their hose."<sup>28</sup> By the time the fire had subsided the next morning, most of the city, except the West End, was destroyed. The fire had left over eleven thousand persons homeless, and had consumed most of the religious and cultural institutions and commercial establishments. Property loss was estimated at \$13,000,000, but only \$4,800,000 was

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<sup>28</sup>One of the best descriptions of the fire's origin and the destruction it produced is Moses Harvey's "The Great Fire of 8 July 1892," Peter Neary and Patrick O'Flaherty (eds.), *By Great Waters* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), pp. 114-118.

covered by insurance.<sup>29</sup>

A government investigation into the fire's origin, conducted by a local magistrate, D.W. Prowse,<sup>30</sup> later blamed Chairman Mitchell for "criminal carelessness" for turning off the water supply without the Council's authorization:

... this largely contributed to the terrible calamity. No urgent reason can be given for such an act which, in view of the forest fires, the phenomenal heat of the previous two weeks, and the consequent danger to the town from fire, cannot be too severely censured . . . .

Prowse withheld his severest criticism for the condition of the Fire Department--"a starved, mismanaged, rotten institution." Although he had made several recommendations to the Council in 1890 for the improvement of the Fire Department as the result of his enquiry into the death of a citizen killed in a fire, the Council took no action,

<sup>29</sup> Report of the St. John's Fire Relief Committee: Fire of July 8, 1892 (St. John's: The Tribune Book and Job Office, 1894), pp. 3-5; and Report of Judge Prowse on the Fire of 8th and 9th July, 1892 (St. John's Evening Telegram, n.d.), pp. 3-4; accounts of social and economic conditions in St. John's immediately after the fire can be found in Moses Harvey's article to the Montreal Gazette, which can be located in the Moses Harvey Scrapbooks, 1892-1898.

<sup>30</sup> Daniel W. Prowse, 1834-1914: Lawyer; MHA Burgeo-LaPoile, 1861-1869; Judge, Central District Court, 1869-1898. Historian and publicist, Prowse wrote the only comprehensive History of Newfoundland, published in 1895. See G.M. Story, "Judge Prowse: Historian and Publicist," Aspects, Vol. 4, No. 3 (March, 1972), pp. 19-25.



except the "ordering of some new hose." That report had suggested the formation of a small, paid, permanent Fire Brigade, instead of the existing voluntary brigades.<sup>31</sup>

Moses Harvey, writing in the Montreal Gazette, said that partisan politics was responsible for the Fire Department's inefficiency:

The truth is, the fatal breath of our miserable party politics tainted this organization, as it does every other we possess. The vile rancours and hatreds; the mean spites and calumnies; the low selfishness, destructive of all public spirit or regard for the common good, engendered and fostered by our party politics, pervade every department of social, civic, and public life. Men are placed in positions of trust not for competency and merit, but they are placed and kept there because they belong to a certain political party. Able and good men are decried and calumniated by these party tools, because they are not members of their clique. Unless a fire brigade is kept entirely free from the foul influence of political parties it never can become efficient. The politician does not ask does a man perform his duty efficiently, but will he help to get me votes?<sup>32</sup>

Citizens, in general, held the Council responsible for the fire, and the government actively encouraged this mistrust.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>31</sup>Report of Judge Prowse on the Fire of 8th and 9th July, 1892, pp. 3-7.

<sup>32</sup>Extract from the Montreal Gazette, in Moses Harvey Scrapbooks, 1892-1898, p. 8.

<sup>33</sup>Evening Herald, September 12, 1892; Evening Telegram, September 21, 1892.

The day after the fire the government took immediate steps to provide food and shelter for the homeless,<sup>34</sup> but the Municipal Council did not become involved. The Government Administrator appointed, on July 11, a Relief Committee to supervise the distribution of relief money and to manage all relief works.<sup>35</sup> This Committee included many of the city's prominent citizens, and represented all denominations and economic groups and political parties. Only one municipal councillor, Chairman Mitchell, was a member-- a symbolic gesture that the government intended to undertake direct responsibility for the city's rebuilding. The immediate arrival of two naval vessels greatly relieved "many well disposed of fears of lawlessness and incendi- arism."<sup>36</sup> Donations of both money and messages of sympathy immediately poured in from Canada, the United States, and Britain.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, two members of the former 1877 Saint John Relief Committee promptly came to

<sup>34</sup> Carter to Knutsford, July 19, 1892, C.O. 194/221, pp. 568-573.

<sup>35</sup> Report of the St. John's Fire Relief Committee, pp. 6-7. See Appendix G for the membership of this Committee.

<sup>36</sup> Carter to Knutsford, July 19, 1892, C.O. 194/221, pp. 568-573.

<sup>37</sup> For example, see A.C. Winton, "Newfoundland and its Capital," Dominion Illustrated Monthly, Vol. 1 (1892), pp. 657-666, for an account of the relief work undertaken in Toronto, Canada.

St. John's, and offered their assistance to the local committee in organizing a relief system.<sup>38</sup> This Relief Committee replaced both the government and the Council in any systematic effort to distribute food, provide temporary shelter, and in giving work through the organization of a Labour Bureau which supplied the necessary labourers upon request from any merchant.<sup>39</sup>

Besides the above relief measures, the citizens were also confronted with the difficult problem of rebuilding the burnt area, particularly the Water-Street commercial establishments where the land leases would now have to be renewed. Many tenants, especially the supporters of the Tory Party, demanded that the Legislature be opened at once to settle these two issues so that they could commence to rebuild their premises. Any immediate attempt to rebuild was, however, hampered by a Government-Council disagreement over how the rebuilding should proceed, and by Whiteway's reluctance to convene the House to legislate on the land tenure question.

<sup>38</sup> Report of the St. John's Fire Relief Committee, p. 9.

<sup>39</sup> Harbour Grace Standard, July 26, 1892; Royal Gazette, July 19, 1892. The homeless were sheltered temporarily in sheds and tents in Bannerman Park, the Parade Grounds, Quidi Vidi; and the Railway Ground. Many others went to the outports; Report of the St. John's Fire Relief Committee, p. 13; Evening Herald, September 12, 1892.

The Municipal Council had been willing to undertake the rebuilding, and several days after the fire met with the Executive to discuss how this work would be done and paid for. It needed the government's assent because under the 1892 Municipal Act it could give street lines, but was unable to undertake any expensive street improvements without the approval of the Governor-in-Council. The Surveyor General's Department undertook a survey of the burnt area,<sup>40</sup> which was presented to a conference between a Council delegation and the Executive on July 24.<sup>41</sup> Both groups endorsed the plan, including a proposal to widen Water Street from sixty to seventy feet, by taking ten feet from the south side of the street.<sup>42</sup> The government later reversed its position, because the added width meant confiscating private property--<sup>43</sup> including that of some of their mercantile supporters. The Council contended, however, that this property belonged to the municipality because when the merchants had signed their leases after the 1846 fire, the waters of the harbour came up to Water

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<sup>40</sup> Royal Gazette, July 19, 20, 22, 1892.

<sup>41</sup> Evening Herald, September 12, 1892.

<sup>42</sup> Surveyor General Woods in Assembly Debates, August 16, 1892, in Evening Telegram, September 8, 1892; "Testimony of Thomas Mitchell in St. John's East Election Petition Trial," as reported in Daily News, March 29, 1894.

<sup>43</sup> Surveyor General Woods in Assembly Debates, August 16, 1892, in Evening Telegram, September 8, 1892.

Street, and the merchants had since enlarged their premises by building out over the harbour.<sup>44</sup> This difference of opinion was discussed at a meeting on July 29, with both sides standing fast. Council then held its own meeting, and passed resolutions confirming their adherence to their suggested width of Water Street as seventy feet, and urging upon the government the urgency of giving street lines to those wishing to build.<sup>45</sup> Thus an impasse developed, with the Council having only the right to give street lines, but wanting a seventy foot width Water Street and lacking the legal right to raise the money needed to compensate property owners. The government wanted to give out the street lines, but the Council refused to permit it.<sup>46</sup> Consequently, the city's rebuilding was unnecessarily delayed, since permanent buildings could not be constructed for private or commercial use. This was especially frustrating for merchants wanting to prepare for fall trade,<sup>47</sup> while it was equally inconvenient for

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<sup>44</sup> "Testimony of Thomas Mitchell in St. John's East Election Petition Trial," as reported in Daily News, March 29, 1894; Morris in Assembly Debates, May 18, 1891, in Evening Telegram, May 28, 1891.

<sup>45</sup> Morning Despatch, July 30, 1892.

<sup>46</sup> Surveyor General Woods in Assembly Debates, August 13, 1892, in Evening Telegram, September 3, 1892.

<sup>47</sup> Harbour Grace Standard, July 29, 1892.

the thousands of homeless citizens waiting for their rebuilt houses.

Another critical problem facing the citizens of St. John's, or more particularly the Water Street merchants, was land tenure, and their determination to either rid themselves of their landlords or at least have a land court to arbitrate fair leases between landlord and tenant. The existing landlord-tenant legislation had favoured the landlord, because under the forty year leases the tenant was responsible for all taxes upon his property. Moreover, this property, with all the improvements which the tenant made to it, at the expiry of the lease became the property of the landlord, who could then find another tenant or charge the original tenant a larger ground rent.<sup>48</sup> Although this legislation applied to all tenants in the city, it was mainly opposed by Water Street merchants who had absentee landlords and wished to acquire their property. Most of the landlords were city residents--including A. Harvey who was one of the city's largest businessmen and a strong Liberal supporter--with sufficient government influence to prevent any anti-landlord legislation.<sup>49</sup> This

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<sup>48</sup>Gunn, The Political History of Newfoundland, 1832-1864, p. 106.

<sup>49</sup>Whiteway in Assembly Debates, August 18, 1892, in Evening Telegram, September 12, 1892.

influence probably explains the government's tardiness in convening the Legislature immediately after the fire.

The Opposition, through a special newspaper, the Morning Despatch<sup>50</sup> all the other dailies having ceased publication temporarily Because their printing presses were destroyed in the fire--was most vocal in its demand that the Legislature be promptly opened to consider the landlord-tenant question, and the problems of rebuilding the city. A Tenants' League was formed on July 20 at a meeting in Moses Monroe's store. Its members wanted immediate legislative action to procure fair play between landlord and tenant regarding rents and leases, and a court to decide the same, based on the principle of the Irish Land Court.<sup>51</sup>

The government finally convened the Legislature on August 11 amidst howls from merchants that this should have been done earlier. Although the government intended to legislate on land tenure, it was not known what that policy would be.<sup>52</sup> The Opposition was skeptical about

<sup>50</sup> The diligent researcher may find the Morning Despatch bound with the Daily Colonist for 1892 in the Newfoundland Archives.

<sup>51</sup> Morning Despatch, July 22, 1892. Monroe chaired the meeting, and P.J. Scott was the secretary. Some of the speakers included Maurice Fenelon, C.W.H. Tessier, J.J. Rogerson; Donald Morison, Joseph Fogarty, P.J. Scott, P.R. Bowers, Campbell Macpherson, D.J. Greene and A.B. Morine.

<sup>52</sup> Harbour Grace Standard, July 29, 1892.

legislation favouring the tenants, because of Whiteway's known sympathies for the interests of the landlords.<sup>53</sup>

The Tories in the Assembly echoed the view of the Tenants' League. A.B. Morine said that because of the government's tardiness, many people now found it almost impossible to construct permanent buildings due to the lateness of the year, or to implement the provision of a rebuilding bill after it had been passed. He also demanded that the government legislate to protect the tenants against the landlords, many of the former having abandoned their leases, while others were undecided.<sup>54</sup> The government explained the delay in the session's opening by all the Surveyor General's records and plans being destroyed in the fire, and new plans having to be made. It had, however, opened the Legislature "with all despatch as soon as the plan had been finished . . . so that necessary power be obtained to carry out the work of laying out the town

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The St. John's Rebuilding Bill defined the conditions under which the city would be rebuilt by the colonial

<sup>53</sup> Moses Harvey Scrapbooks, 1892-1898, p. 27; Morning Despatch, July 27, 30, 1892: Whiteway was, in fact, an agent for some absentee landlords. Evening Herald, September 16, 1892.

<sup>54</sup> Morine in Assembly Debates, August 13, 1892, in Evening Telegram, September 2, 3, 1892.

<sup>55</sup> Surveyor General Woods in Assembly Debates, August 13, 1892, in Evening Telegram, September 3, 1892.



government. It outlined the lines, widths and lengths of streets (Water Street to be sixty feet wide); the location of fire breaks; the mode of arbitration and compensation for land taken by the government; and vested in the government the authority to decide what buildings would be erected. Furthermore, the citizens of St. John's were made responsible for the debt which would result from rebuilding, even though the Municipal Council would have no control over the expenditure. Indeed, the Council was required to pay interest on a proposed rebuilding loan by increasing its existing rates and assessments.<sup>56</sup> Whether the colonial government or the Council should have responsibility for this expenditure was an issue which sparked considerable debate.

The Opposition, which naturally did not want the government to control this expenditure, demanded the Municipal Council control it since the citizens would inevitably have to pay for this large sum. Donald Morison complained that the Council had not been consulted on the bill's details, and emphasized that "the money of the city should be spent by those whom the citizens had elected to spend it . . ."<sup>57</sup> The Whiteway Government, however, argued:

<sup>56</sup>56 Victoria, Cap. 1, "St. John's Rebuilding Act, 1892."

<sup>57</sup>Morison in Assembly Debates, August 13, 16, in Evening Telegram, September 3, 7, 8, 1892.

that since the colony would raise the rebuilding loan and guarantee its interest, then it had the responsibility to see that "the money was properly expended."<sup>58</sup>

Another reason the government assumed responsibility for rebuilding was the lack of public confidence in the Municipal Council. The Council's creditability was damaged both by foreign newspapers' accounts--including one written by a St. John's clergyman--which blamed the fire on the "bungling and incompetency of the Municipal Council,"<sup>59</sup> and by colonial politicians brandishing the Council as "incompetent," and calling for its abolition. Even Morris supported this suggestion, believing "the wiping out of the Council would be the most popular measure that could be introduced into this Assembly . . ."<sup>60</sup>

The Whiteway Government also passed a Land Tenure Bill. It stated that leases were to be made for a period of 99 years, and that improvements made by the tenant became the property of the landlord at the lease's expiry. Any improvements made on property leased for less than 99 years would be valued by three arbitrators, two of which

<sup>58</sup> Surveyor General Woods in Assembly Debates, August 16, 1892, in Evening Telegram, September 8, 1892.

<sup>59</sup> Morris in Assembly Debates, August 16, 1892, in Evening Telegram, September 8, 1892.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

would be appointed by the landlord and tenant, while the third, if the two parties could not agree upon a third, would be appointed by the Supreme Court. The Bill did not cover any leases entered into between the period after the fire and the passing of the Act.<sup>61</sup> Whiteway said that these conditions would thus encourage tenants to erect suitable and substantial houses and dwellings in the city.<sup>62</sup>

The Opposition bitterly opposed the Bill, accusing the government of favouring landlords against tenants, and repeated their demand for a land court to decide fair and equitable rents upon appeal to it by a leasee. This would include leasees whose property was destroyed in the fire, or whose leases would soon expire. They also demanded that tenants be compensated for improvements made upon 99 year leases, as well as shorter leases. Furthermore, they wanted the proposed court to decide the value of the property plus the value of the land if the tenant wished to purchase both.<sup>63</sup> The government refused their suggestions. Whiteway said that "the less the government interfered with contracts the better," preferring instead "to leave

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<sup>61</sup> 56 Victoria, Cap. 2, "Land Tenure Act, 1892."

<sup>62</sup> Whiteway in Assembly Debates, August 18, 1892, in Evening Telegram, September 12, 1892.

<sup>63</sup> Morine in Assembly Debates, August 18, 1892, in Evening Telegram, September 8, 13, 1892.

landlords and tenants to deal with themselves."<sup>64</sup> Morris argued there was no need for a land court, because most landlords were giving "just and equitable terms to their tenants," and cautioned the House against letting the impression get abroad that St. John's was "a bad place to invest money." He said that the principle of long leases had been designed to induce tenants, particularly those on Water Street where most of the land was owned by absentee landlords, to "put up substantial buildings that will be a credit to the city."<sup>65</sup>

The Legislature prorogued, most citizens--except for journalists whose newspapers had recommenced publication in early September--were preoccupied with the rebuilding, and with aiding the many homeless sheltered in private homes and temporary tents and sheds around the city. These temporary structures were constructed by the Relief Committee, which also regularly supplied the needy with food and clothing.<sup>66</sup> The Committee, which functioned throughout 1892 and 1893, disbursed altogether \$336,463.77 in private and public relief funds. Among its many

<sup>64</sup>Whiteway in Assembly Debates, August 18, 1892, in Evening Telegram, September 14, 1892.

<sup>65</sup>Morris in Assembly Debates, August 18, 19, 1892, in Evening Telegram, September 8, 9, 1892.

<sup>66</sup>Carter to Ripon, August 16, 1892, G.O. 194/221, pp. 584-588; Royal Gazette, August 19, 1892.

activities, the Committee provided mechanics with tools to replace those lost in the fire, and gave lumber to builders erecting permanent houses for the working class, on condition that the occupants of the sheds and tents received a year's free occupancy. It also set up a sub-committee under Morris, with \$50,000 at its disposal, to help the upper and middle classes who lost property in the fire. The Committee opened a school of industry for unemployed women, and taught them spinning and knitting, while, in other instances, the problem of female unemployment was partially disposed of by paying passages for those women wanting to go to Canada and the United States where their services as domestics were greatly appreciated.<sup>67</sup> Because the Committee consisted mainly of government supporters and several civil servants, and despite the presence of several prominent Tory merchants, the Opposition charged the government with using the Committee for political

<sup>67</sup> Faith Fenton, "A Land of Fog and Fishes," reprinted from the Toronto Globe in Evening Herald, August 21, 1890. Fenton, a Canadian journalist who visited Newfoundland, commented that "Newfoundland girls made excellent servants; they are not polished; but very teachable, good-natured, willing and honest. A Newfoundland serving maid is really a treasure compared with the self-assertive and independent article that invades and terrorizes American and Canadian homes. Chance visitors to the island have discovered this, and already there is quite a demand for Newfoundland girls as domestics. One or two gentlemen informed me that they have already sent quite a number over to New Brunswick and Nova Scotia at the urgent request of friends . . . ."

purposes, particularly giving relief and work to Liberal supporters.<sup>68</sup> One zealous Tory even went so far as to write some prominent merchants in England not to send any more relief money because the Committee already had sufficient money, and besides it "could not be trusted."<sup>69</sup> Although these charges were never substantiated, suspicion of the Relief Committee's activities--encouraged by the opposition--lingered on, and during the 1893 legislative session the Tories persistently clamoured for a publication of the Committee's accounts. The government evaded all responsibility for the Committee, claiming that since the Committee was appointed by the Administrator, the House had no authority to investigate the Committee's proceedings.<sup>70</sup> The Committee's report was not published until early 1894, and no mismanagement of relief funds was ever levied against Committee members.

The rebuilding of the city and the importation of necessary foodstuffs to replace those destroyed in the fire produced an unusually large revenue for 1892. The Tories considered this 'surplus' to have resulted solely from the importation by the people of St. John's of such

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<sup>68</sup> For instance, Evening Herald, September 19, 1892.

<sup>69</sup> Evening Telegram, November 8, 1892.

<sup>70</sup> Whiteway in Assembly Debates, April 24, 1893, in Evening Telegram, May 22, 1893.

articles as furniture, clothing, food, and building supplies,<sup>71</sup> and wanted the government to turn some of it over to the Municipal Council to replace the revenue it lost because of the fire, and to spend the remainder on the city's rebuilding.<sup>72</sup> Several Tories--including Moses Monroe and Sir James Winter--convened a public meeting on September 30 to start an agitation demanding that the surplus revenue be spent for municipal services and improvements. A committee was appointed to draft a petition which would be presented to the Legislature in the 1893 session. Other public meetings were held during the rest of the year, and the Tory press frequently contained articles supporting the agitation.<sup>73</sup> The committee did not, however, take any concerted action until the commencement of the 1893 session.

The government considered the agitation a Tory attempt to "stir up political excitement and make capital out of the recent fire . . ." and suggested that the Opposition was "solely perplexed over the problem as to how

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<sup>71</sup> Evening Herald, October 4, 1892.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., October 1, 1892.

<sup>73</sup> The Committee members were Maurice Fenelon, J. McDougall, L. March, L. O'B. Furlong, J. English, and M.T. Knight. James J. Callahan chaired the meeting, while M.P. Gibbs was the secretary. See Evening Herald, October 3, 4, 5, 28, 1892, for articles expounding the Tory position on the surplus revenue.

they can manage to connect themselves with the expenditure of that surplus money."<sup>74</sup> The Evening Telegram, while emphasizing that the surplus belonged to the whole country since the outports also purchased some of the imported goods, declared that the government would "deal liberally with St. John's."

Apart from the abundance of employment already afforded the people of St. John's in the way of widening and straightening streets, excavating, etc., a handsome donation from the public treasury will be placed in the hands of the Relief Committee for distribution among fire-sufferers . . . . It may be \$50,000, it may even be \$200,000 . . . .

The newspaper appealed to citizens not to take any definite action on the surplus revenue issue, until the Legislature met.<sup>75</sup>

The fire greatly strained the meagre finances of the Municipal Council, the Council's total losses in the fire were approximately \$40,000, including almost one-fifth of its estimated 1892 revenue. Because of the fire, the government agreed in late 1892 to let the interest due by the Council of \$35,549.72 for 1892 stand over for readjustment at the end of the year. The Council wrote the government on January 30, 1893, that it anticipated a deficit of \$21,585 in 1893 which would have to be compensated for by increased taxation, unless the government

<sup>74</sup> Evening Telegram, October 7, 1892.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., October 3, 30, 1892.



gave some of the surplus revenue as a Council deputation had requested in a meeting with the Executive.<sup>76</sup> The government did not make a firm commitment, but promised the Council "would receive the best consideration and attention of the Government."<sup>77</sup> The Council was, therefore, in no position after the fire to maintain even existing services, and was unable to undertake the necessary street and sewer improvements and water extensions. Instead, the government took over direct responsibility for them, but then charged the cost to the Council's account.<sup>78</sup> At times, the government operated independently of the Municipal Council and its departments, and even established and paid its own sanitary staff in late 1892 to clean the city.<sup>79</sup> Although the Council was financially unable to attend adequately to its services, the Liberal press called for the Council's abolition, emphasizing that the citizens were not getting the necessary municipal services to warrant what it considered such an expensive institution.<sup>80</sup> The Evening Telegram cited the many public

<sup>76</sup> "Municipal Council Report," JHA, 1893, p. 242.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Minutes of the Executive Council, November 26, December 5, 1892, GN9/1 (located at the Newfoundland Archives).

<sup>79</sup> Evening Telegram, September 10, 1892.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., February 11, 17, 1893.

complaints to the Council at its weekly meeting as "unmistakable evidence of neglect and incapacity . . . ." These complaints generally consisted of an inadequate water supply, bad sewerage (or no sewerage at all), filthy streets, and faulty lighting. That newspaper considered this to be a "most vexatious state of affairs," and suggested that:

. . . no time should be lost by the Legislature in either abolishing the Council and falling back once more on the Board of Works, or so amending and improving the Municipal Act as to compel those who represent the different wards to faithfully discharge their obligations to the people . . . .<sup>81</sup>

The Evening Telegram's criticisms were designed to place the blame for poor municipal services upon the Municipal Council at a time when the government itself had undertaken the rebuilding of the city, and had raised a large loan for that purpose. Since the government made no attempt in the 1893 session to abolish the Council, the Liberals were; as Winter correctly noted in that session, "making a little political capital at the expense of the Council; and . . . endeavouring to make it appear that the Council was neglecting their duties . . . ." <sup>82</sup>

The Opposition defended the Council, charging that the municipal system did not work well because of the

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., January 7, 1893.

<sup>82</sup> Winter in Assembly Debates, March 15, 1893, in Evening Telegram, March 29, 1893.

interference of the colonial government in municipal affairs through its appointees and legislative authority to amend the Council's accounts and powers of taxation. Councillor Morison told a Tory public meeting on March 7, held to discuss the municipal debt and government intrusion in municipal affairs, that the city needed full incorporation since under the existing system

. . . no matter what government is in power, party politics must of necessity be introduced into municipal affairs as at present constituted; with the result that the city's funds would be wasted and directed to improper purposes.<sup>83</sup>

While the Tories probably championed full incorporation because the Liberals were calling for the Council's abolition, Morison's views evidently represented Council's views and probably the concerns of many property owners that the government would use the rebuilding funds for its own political ends. Not too many citizens were willing; nonetheless, to agitate for full incorporation.

Civic apathy and the city's partisan politics completely appalled one recent resident in St. John's who was familiar with municipal affairs in the United States and other countries. In a letter to the Daily Tribune on January 4, 1893, public apathy was blamed for the domination of Council by colonial politicians, and the proposal to abolish it.

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<sup>83</sup> Evening Herald, March 9, 1893.

This city . . . is now, after a trial of a few years, . . . and apparently without a murmur, will be expected to give up the care of its own affairs to the tender mercies of any political faction that may happen to hold the reins of government . . . It is to be said that we cannot find men, capable and desirous of securing our civic independence . . . <sup>84</sup>

With 1893 an election year, it is not surprising that the Council's right to at least some of the surplus revenue became a contentious issue among the politicians.

The Opposition held several public meetings to discuss the question of the surplus revenue, and to gain support for a petition which they intended to present to the Legislature, requesting most, if not all of the money for St. John's. This political position was in direct contrast to the government's policy that St. John's would receive some, but not all of the surplus revenue, which would not be exactly known until the budget was made public. E.P. Morris said during Assembly debate that the government had not forgotten the rights of the citizens, and would give the city most of the revenue to be used for several purposes. First, the government would organize, equip, and give the city a fire brigade, costing

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<sup>84</sup> Daily Tribune, January 4, 1893. F.R. Bowers was the editor and proprietor of the Daily Tribune. The Daily Colonist did not republish after the fire, because the Colonist Printing and Publishing Company was dissolved, Morning Despatch, August 9, 1892.

approximately \$50,000. Second, it was "considering the advisability" of paying off the debt owed to the colonial government by the Council for interest, and giving the Council \$25,000 for loss of revenues resulting from the fire. Third, the government intended to give a 'handsome subscription' out of the surplus revenue to the people who were burnt out in the fire.<sup>85</sup> The Evening Telegram ridiculed the Opposition leaders and their petition, commenting that they must have been 'seized' by some 'mad insanity' since the citizens saw their true motive

to leave no stone unturned in their efforts to defeat the Government candidates for St. John's in the next general election. They are hungering after the surplus revenue; and how to get control of this money is the difficulty they feel anxious to surmount . . . .

The newspaper confidently asserted that "the principal promoters of those meetings are more unpopular amongst all classes in St. John's today than any other residents of the city . . . ."86

Despite their 'unpopularity', the Tories did receive considerable support for their petition, which had over 2,200 signatures.<sup>87</sup> The Evening Herald reported the petition to be approximately 31 feet long, and "undoubtedly

<sup>85</sup> Morris in Assembly Debates, March 16, 1893, in Evening Telegram, April 5, 1893.

<sup>86</sup> Evening Telegram, March 22, April 3, 1893.

<sup>87</sup> Morris in Assembly Debates, May 3, 1893, in Evening Telegram, June 10, 1893.

one of the largest and most numerously signed in the history of this country."<sup>88</sup> The citizens had signed the petition mainly because it proposed to reduce municipal taxation, an issue which directly affected them--in the pocketbook. The petitioners wanted the government to spend a portion of the surplus on expenditures rendered necessary under the Rebuilding Act, instead of raising a loan to pay for it. In addition, they wanted the government to suspend any taxation on burnt out property until it had been rebuilt.<sup>89</sup>

The petition was given to Halleran, (Liberal, St. John's East-MHA), for presentation to the House on April 26. This he did not do. Finally, on May 2, M. Gibbs, one of the petitioners, went to see Halleran. The latter refused to return the petition, lost his temper, and hit Gibbs in the face.<sup>90</sup> However, the next day he submitted the petition to the Assembly. He had tarried, he said, because the government had been deciding how to reply, and had now decided to accede to the petitioners' demands. He said the government would spend \$50,000 to organize a fire

<sup>88</sup> Evening Herald, April 24, 1893.

<sup>89</sup> Halleran in Assembly Debates, May 3, 1893, in Evening Telegram, June 9, 1893.

<sup>90</sup> Evening Herald, May 3, 1893; M.P. Gibbs to Evening Herald, May 6, 1893.

brigade, and pay off a \$81,397 debt the Council owed the colonial government. These two expenditures would amount to almost the total surplus revenue of \$137,000.<sup>91</sup>

Another St. John's East MHA, James Fox, stated that the city members had used "their influence from the outset to forward such views as had been set out in the petition . . . ."<sup>92</sup> Morris commented that the government had complied with the wishes of the petitioners, but differed as to how the surplus would be distributed. He noted that as long as the money was spent in the "interest of the city," then nobody could object to the way it would be spent.<sup>93</sup>

The Opposition was far from satisfied with the government's decision. Morine claimed that the government had initially planned to give St. John's only the money for the fire brigade, and would have not given the other money if not for the public pressure brought to bear upon the government in the form of the petition.<sup>94</sup> The Evening Herald wrote that the people of St. John's had no reason to thank the government for that part of the surplus

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<sup>91</sup>Halleran in Assembly Debates, May 3, 1893, in Evening Telegram, June 9, 1893.

<sup>92</sup>Fox in Assembly Debates, May 3, 1893, in Evening Telegram, June 10, 1893.

<sup>93</sup>Morris in Assembly Debates, May 3, 1893, in Evening Telegram, June 10, 1893.

<sup>94</sup>Morine in Assembly Debates, May 3, 1893, in Evening Telegram, June 10, 1893.

revenue which was given them, but instead the Opposition who had forced the Government "at the last moment . . . to do justice to the people of St. John's."<sup>95</sup>

The government then brought in legislation on May 22 to organize a city fire brigade, using the \$50,000 already allocated from the surplus revenue. Morris said that the proposed brigade would be organized on the most "modern and improved principles," and that an official had already been sent to examine the Montreal fire department. Under the bill, a 'Board of Commissioners' would be appointed to decide the manner of organization the brigade would assume, subject to the Governor-in-Council's approval. Control of the brigade was vested in the commissioners who would be appointed by the Governor-in-Council. The Municipal Council had no responsibility for the fire department, except to pay an annual subsidy of \$5,000 to the commissioners for the department's maintenance.<sup>96</sup> Morris said that the colonial government proposed to divest the Council of its control over the fire department because it did not want the department's management to be subject to a

<sup>95</sup>Evening Herald, May 4, 1893.

<sup>96</sup>56 Victoria, Cap. 5, "Fire Department Act, 1893"; Morris in Assembly Debates, May 22, 1893; in Evening Telegram, July 8, 1893. For further information on the history of fire brigade organizations, see Arthur Fox, The Newfoundland Constabulary (St. John's: Robinson Blackmore Printing and Publishing Ltd., 1971), pp. 93-102.



"changeable, variable body," which would be more concerned with the department's expenses than with its efficiency. He said that this was particularly the Council's attitude before the fire, and cited the case where Mitchell's Council ordered that the fire engine not be continually under steam, even though that was one of the first rules passed by the first council in 1888.<sup>97</sup> Work began on the construction of fire halls in the summer of 1893, but the fire brigade was not established until 1895.<sup>98</sup> The government did not, however, fulfill its other promise to pay off Council's interest.<sup>99</sup> Nevertheless, these promises were made because there was a general election due that year.

With the election in November, the government spent a considerable amount of public funds in St. John's on street and sewer improvements, and ignored Council's requests from a delegation which met regularly in May and June with the Executive, for money to carry out certain street and sewer improvements. At one June meeting, Whiteway promised the Council almost \$100,000 to do this work, and that final arrangements would be made within a

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<sup>97</sup>Morris in Assembly Debates, May 22, 1893, in Evening Telegram, July 10, 1893.

<sup>98</sup>Fox, The Newfoundland Constabulary, pp. 93-97.

<sup>99</sup>The Council, in fact, did not make any interest payments on its debt for the 1890's.

few days of the meeting. The Council never received this money, and the work was done by the Surveyor General's Department which had been doing it while the interviews were being held. The Council protested the Surveyor General's actions both orally and in writing to the government, but Chairman Mitchell said that Whiteway replied verbally that there is an "indisposition on the part of the Government to deal with the Council." Later, the Council managed to make an agreement with the Surveyor General's Department, whereby the latter would construct the necessary sewers under the supervision of the City Engineer. The government retained, however, control of the labour supply and wages.<sup>100</sup>

The election campaign was what Prowse called the "most stubbornly-contested party fight in our annals,"<sup>101</sup> as both parties maximized their efforts and money to literally buy votes. Governor O'Brien observed that:

money - where it is to come from I do not know - is being squandered in all directions, some 1500 men and 300 carts being normally employed in St. John's on public works, the chief occupation seeming to be for the former to congregate together to talk over the contest

<sup>100</sup> "Testimony of Thomas Mitchell in St. John's East Election Petition Trial," as reported in Daily News, March 28, 29, 1894.

<sup>101</sup> Prowse, A History of Newfoundland, p. 529.

when they are not taken off their work to aid in a public procession or demonstration in favor of some Government candidate.<sup>102</sup>

Similarly, the Opposition tried to get the large working-man vote through the influence of their mercantile supporters, and by having two labour candidates--one for each End. (See Table 4). The other Tory candidates were either merchants or lawyers, but all, except Moses Monroe, had been prominent members of the old Catholic Liberal party.<sup>103</sup> The Liberal candidates were also either merchants or lawyers, but were generally younger than their Tory counterparts. The Whiteway Government was re-elected with twenty-six candidates out of a total of thirty-six, and won five out of the six St. John's seats.<sup>104</sup> In St. John's the election results between the two parties were relatively close, except for the top candidates in each district--Morris in the West, and Fox, a Morris supporter, in the eastern district. Morris's strong showing exemplified his tremendous support among the city's working class, and his dominant position generally in the urban politics of St. John's.

Having been re-elected, the government quickly moved to remove Mitchell from the Municipal Council and substitute

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<sup>102</sup> O'Brien to Ripon, November 4, 1893, C.O. 194/225, pp. 85-88; Miller, "A History," pp. 271-272.

<sup>103</sup> Prowse, A History of Newfoundland, p. 529.

<sup>104</sup> Hiller, "A History," Appendix 2, Table IX, p. 372.

TABLE 4

## ST. JOHN'S EAST AND WEST ELECTION RESULTS, 1893

District	Candidates					
	Name	Political Affiliation	Age	Religion	Occupation	Votes Polled
St. John's East	James P. Fox	Liberal	33	Roman Catholic	Accountant	2,134
	T.J. Murphy	Liberal	32	Roman Catholic	Lawyer	1,452
	L.O'B.Furlong	Liberal	37	Roman Catholic	Commission merchant	1,298
	John Boggan	Tory	?	Roman Catholic	Cooper	1,229
	J.D.Ryan	Tory	47	Roman Catholic	Merchant	1,202
	M. Fenelon	Tory	46	Roman Catholic	Bookstore owner	1,144
	J.Halleran	Independent	?	Roman Catholic	Builder	805
St. John's West	E.P.Morris	Liberal	34	Roman Catholic	Lawyer	2,098
	J.C.Tessier	Liberal	40?	Roman Catholic?	Merchant	1,962
	M.W.Furlong	Liberal	29	Roman Catholic	Lawyer	1,730
	M.Monroe	Tory	50?	Presbyterian	Merchant	1,562
	P.J.Scott	Tory	45	Roman Catholic	Lawyer	1,534
	J.J.Callanan	Tory	51	Roman Catholic	Grocer	1,258

Source: Evening Herald, October 27, November 8, 1893.

a more loyal supporter, T.J. Edens.<sup>105</sup> At Council's January 4 weekly meeting, Power was elected Chairman by the Liberal majority. The Evening Herald considered Power's election "from an utilitarian point of view perhaps the best that could be made . . . ." It suggested that Councillor Goodfellow would have made a far better chairman, but "he lacks what is considered a very essential qualification, namely, he is not a persona grata with the Government . . . ." The newspaper said that the city must have full incorporation because under the existing system the councillors had no real authority

. . . with the Government . . . possessing a representation on the Board, and a practical veto on all the Council's actions, it follows that in order to have the city's business carried on, it is necessary for the Council to be in alliance with the Government. Should it display a will of its own, or endeavour to work out an independent line of action, the screws are put on, and the Council is reduced to a condition of almost desuetude . . . .

The Evening Herald hoped that Power's chairmanship would mean that Council's relations would work 'more smoothly', and expressed fears that a Liberal-dominated Council would consent to whatever expenditures the government wished to make in the city.<sup>106</sup> But while the Liberals were enjoying the success of their re-election, the Tories were conspiring to have the government removed from office.

<sup>105</sup>Appendix D.

<sup>106</sup>Evening Herald, January 5, 1894.

The Opposition filed petitions on January 6 in the Supreme Court under the 1889 Corrupt Practices Act, charging some government members with illegally using public funds to gain the political support of their constituents. Several were found guilty and unseated, thus forcing the government's resignation on April 11 and the assumption of power by the Tories.<sup>107</sup> Among those unseated were Murphy and Fox in St. John's East, and the three St. John's West MHA's.

The Tory Goodridge Government (April-December, 1894) dismissed the two Liberal appointees on the Municipal Council and replaced them with two Tories, Thomas Mitchell and N. Cousens. The latter was replaced after only a few days in office by James J. Callanan, a former St. John's West MHA.<sup>108</sup> With their Party in office, the Tory press persistently called for a full measure of full incorporation with a property franchise which would elect a Council not administered by professional politicians, but by businessmen, "good men, with a business knowledge and a capacity to grasp the requirements of the city."<sup>109</sup> The Daily News, which commenced publication in early 1894, declared in its

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<sup>107</sup>See Hiller, "A History," pp. 272-286, for a discussion of the events surrounding the removal of the White-way Government.

<sup>108</sup>Appendix D.

<sup>109</sup>For instance, Evening Herald, November 21, 1894.

first editorial, that it would be "the organ, not of the Municipal Council, but of the Municipality of St. John's . . ."<sup>110</sup> The newspaper wrote that St. John's needed a Council "knowing nothing of politics . . ." because the "sanitary arrangements of a city have nothing to do with politics in their accepted sense . . ."<sup>111</sup> The Tory press particularly criticized the late Whiteway Government's management of municipal affairs since the 1892 Fire, and said that unnecessary and illegal expenditures had been and were still being made, "a debt being piled up which will paralyze the citizens when they come to realize its extent . . ."

Here we have a city . . . with a comparative small revenue, a large portion of it still unbuilt, and many large and serious expenditures rendered imperative by the late conflagration. Our possible maximum revenue is well defined, and we should know exactly what our spending powers are. Yet we are going ahead week after week, engaged in works which, if carried out in the present manner, will result in a gigantic crash . . .<sup>112</sup>

The Evening Herald wrote that over the past couple of years,

. . . the streets have been dug up and filled in again; have been macadamized and then the top dressing taken off again; have been made and remade, spoiled by cuts for water and sewer pipes, altered by injudicious leveling, arranged, rearranged, and ill-treated generally . . .<sup>113</sup>

<sup>110</sup> Daily News, February 16, 1894.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., September 25, 1894.

<sup>112</sup> Evening Herald, November 21, 1894.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

It is quite conceivable that had the Goodridge Government remained in office longer than the several months that it did, legislation would have been passed creating a municipal system independent of the colonial government but with a property franchise giving control of the Council to property owners. But the government, however, resigned in late December amidst the collapse of the colony's two commercial banks, and because it was a minority government after the November by-elections which returned all Liberal candidates except one to replace the unseated MHA's.<sup>114</sup> The commercial collapse meant that both the colony and the city would have to exercise extreme caution in their expenditures.

The bank crash had immediate disastrous effects upon the commercial and social life of St. John's, as residents having notes on the bankrupt Union and Commercial Banks now found themselves "without a currency."

All business was suspended. The shops and stores were left without customers, the people having no money to buy. Factories and workshops had to dismiss their employees. There was no means of paying wages, and no customers for the products of industry. No one would accept the notes of the bank, of which an immense amount was in circulation.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Hiller, "A History," pp. 286-288.

<sup>115</sup> Moses Harvey, "The Economic Condition of Newfoundland," Journal of the Canadian Bankers' Association (January, 1896), p. 138.



The Liberal Government passed legislation guaranteeing Union notes at 80 cents, and those of the Commercial Bank at 20 cents. This guarantee was in particular favourable to city residents, most of whom held Union notes.<sup>116</sup> Prospects of a collapse in the colony's economy were averted by Bond's successful attempt in May to raise \$500,000 to pay off its floating debt, and to continue the administration of the colony. Bond's action came only after the government had failed to get the needed financial assistance from the Colonial Office and Canada.<sup>117</sup>

The Municipal Council, whose Tory appointees were replaced by Liberals E.W. Bennett and T.J. Edens, similarly had almost no funds at its disposal. It met infrequently in the first two months following the crash, apparently because most councillors were too preoccupied with their businesses.<sup>118</sup> The Council agreed on January 24 to accept payment of its water rates in Commercial and Union notes at the value guaranteed by the government.<sup>119</sup> With only a limited revenue, the Council managed to pass its weekly pay roll, but was unable to undertake any extensive improvements. To help even relieve the burden of its pay roll, the

<sup>116</sup>Hiller, "A History," p. 295.

<sup>117</sup>Ibid., pp. 299-311.

<sup>118</sup>Daily News, February 15, 1895.

<sup>119</sup>Proceedings of the St. John's Municipal Council, January 24, 1895, as reported in Evening Herald, January 25, 1895.

Council unanimously accepted Southcott's motion to reduce on April 18 the wages of its labourers from a dollar a day to 80 cents.<sup>120</sup> A Finance Committee meeting was held on March 26, but very little business was done, since the Council was apparently waiting for a resolution of the colonial financial difficulties.<sup>121</sup>

It appears that although the government demanded the Council pay its interest for 1895,<sup>122</sup> the Council refused to do so unless it was given additional revenues. The Council's 1895 estimates, submitted to the government, only allowed for the maintenance of its operations, and did not include interest payments. As part of its own retrenchment policy, the Council dismissed several officers, including the assistant engineer and the plumbing inspector since the Council did not have any major public works to undertake in the near future, and reduced the salaries of others.<sup>123</sup>

Having failed to retain control of the Municipal Council after Mitchell's election as Chairman in early

<sup>120</sup> Proceedings of the St. John's Municipal Council, April 18, 1895, as reported in Evening Herald, April 19, 1895.

<sup>121</sup> Evening Herald, March 28, 1895.

<sup>122</sup> Berteau to Kelly, June 26, 1895, GN2/1, Outgoing Correspondence of the Colonial Secretary's Office.

<sup>123</sup> Proceedings of the St. John's Municipal Council, July 5, 1895, as reported in Daily News, July 6, 1895; and "Municipal Council Report," JHA, 1894-95, pp. 311-314.

1892, the Whiteway Government pursued a policy of limiting the Council's authority, in particular its source of patronage. One restriction was Council's right to make compensations for land taken for street improvements without the approval of the Governor-in-Council. This proved critical immediately after the fire in mid-1892 when both the government and the Council argued over which body should undertake the rebuilding of the city. The issue was finally resolved after a special session of the Legislature was convened and the government took back from the Council the rebuilding powers given under the 1888 Municipal Act. The government then assumed responsibility for rebuilding and other municipal improvements, and charged the expenditure to the Municipal Council, thus doubling the municipal debt.<sup>124</sup>

## CHAPTER V

### REACTION AND REFORM, 1896-1902

The precarious financial condition of the Municipal Council was the most important issue confronting voters in the January, 1896, municipal election. At the end of the 1895 financial year, the government had charged \$1,657,793.75 to the Council as its share of the public debt.<sup>1</sup> Not only had the Council not paid its interest to the colonial government since 1891, but the revenues were only barely adequate to enable it to carry on operations. The only way it could pay the annual interest would be by increased taxation. Since the 1892 fire, the Council had suggested several sources of revenue--including a poll tax and increasing the coal duties--but the government had refused to accept them.<sup>2</sup> The election meant in fact that voters would have to decide whether to continue a municipal system strongly controlled by the colonial government or to have full incorporation.

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<sup>1</sup>"Documents relating to the conference at Ottawa upon the subject of Confederation with Canada," p. 32; C.O. 194/231, 1895, p. 132.

<sup>2</sup>Harris in Legislative Council Debates, August 4, 1896, in Evening Telegram, August 19, 1896; "Municipal Council Annual Report," JHA, 1896, p. 407.

Both political parties appealed to voters to elect councillors "not upon their political beliefs or opinions," but upon the possession of "business experience to formulate plans for remedying the evils affecting the municipality and especially the state of its finances."<sup>3</sup> Such appeals were made not only to secure the "most suitable candidate,"<sup>4</sup> but also to prevent the election of labour candidates, particularly in wards one and two.

Only three members of the out-going Council stood for re-election. These were Harris in ward one, Southcott in ward two, and Power in ward four. But in ward five, J.J. Callanan, an ex-councillor who had been a Tory appointee in 1894, was a candidate. Although most candidates were active in colonial politics, they did not conduct their campaigns along the lines of their respective parties.<sup>5</sup> (See Table 5). "In numerous instances," wrote the Tory Daily News, "men politically opposed are working together in municipal matters."<sup>6</sup> Instead, most candidates concentrated on municipal issues such as an improved water system and retrenchment and reform of finances, along with

<sup>3</sup> Evening Telegram, January 17, 1896; Evening Herald, January 23, 1896.

<sup>4</sup> Evening Telegram, January 17, 1896.

<sup>5</sup> Evening Herald, January 14, 1896.

<sup>6</sup> Daily News, January 22, 1896.

TABLE 5

## ST. JOHN'S 1896 MUNICIPAL ELECTION RESULTS

Ward	Candidates				Votes Polled
	Name	Political Affiliation	Religion	Occupation	
1	John Harris	Liberal	Roman Catholic	Merchant	274
	Richard Collins	Independent	Roman Catholic	Mechanic	239
2	Thomas Keating	Independent	Roman Catholic?	Publican	302
	J.T.Southcott	Tory	Anglican	Builder	153
	F.H.Barnes	?	?	Merchant	50
3	J.V.O'Dea	Tory	Roman Catholic	Commission merchant	258
	Levi Diamond	?	Methodist?	Stone dealer	256
	C.F.Muir	Liberal	Roman Catholic	Stone cutter	228
4	Michael Power	Liberal	Roman Catholic	Master Cooper	342
	Michael Tobin	Tory	Roman Catholic	Publican	337
5	J.J.Callanan	Tory	Roman Catholic	Grocer	411
	James Angel	Liberal	Methodist	Mechanic	302

Source: Evening Herald, January 13, 24, 1896; Evening Telegram, January 25, 1896.

full incorporation.<sup>7</sup>

Despite a snow storm on the day of the election, January 23, over 70 per cent of the electorate cast their ballots.<sup>8</sup> Harris and Power were reelected, but Southcott was defeated by a publican, Thomas Keating. Ward three continued its tradition of electing a representative from the Water Street mercantile community in John V. O'Dea. J.J. Callanan; an ex-MHA for St. John's West in the 1880's and former President of the Mechanics Society for many years, was elected in ward five. Callanan's success appears to have been mainly the result of support from that ward's labourers in addition to that of the brewers and publicans.<sup>9</sup>

What is noteworthy about this election is the emergence of a solid labour vote, taking both parties by surprise; even though a large labour organization had existed in the city for at least a year.<sup>10</sup> This organization exerted its greatest influence in wards one, two,

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.; Evening Telegram, January 10, 1896.

<sup>8</sup> Evening Herald, January 25, 1896.

<sup>9</sup> For instance, E.W. Bennett, the owner of a large West End brewery, nominated Callanan as a candidate, whose opponent was James Angel, a prominent temperance leader.

<sup>10</sup> Daily News, March 29, 1895.

and three. Harris defeated R.H. Collins,<sup>11</sup> the President of the 'Political Reform and Labour Association' by only thirty-five votes, while Southcott's defeat was attributed to his unpopularity with workers during his term as councillor.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, the Association was instrumental in electing O'Dea. One member said they supported O'Dea because they were displeased with Morris, who was obviously opposed to the establishment of an independent labour party, and his attempt to prevent Collins' election.<sup>13</sup> Labour's strong electoral showing represented an attempt by workers to become directly involved in the political system, and also a protest vote against the government's and Council's employment practices of frequently giving work to outport instead of St. John's workmen.<sup>14</sup> One contemporary analyst noted that this would be

<sup>11</sup> Collins was one of many labourers who had supported Whiteway's "Workingman's" Government in 1889-1890. Collins evidently became disillusioned with both political parties, and helped to start a labour organization which, according to one member, was determined to give the labourer a voice "in the political future of their country." Evening Telegram, September 13, 1890; Daily News, January 27, 1896.

<sup>12</sup> Evening Telegram, January 24, Evening Herald, January 25, 1896.

<sup>13</sup> "Labourer" to Daily News, January 27, 1896.

<sup>14</sup> One example was in late December, 1895, when several outport men received work from the Council upon the presentation of a note written by Whiteway. Yet, several St. John's men were at the municipal office the same time, but could not get any work. Evening Herald, December 12, 1895.



a political force to be "reckoned with at the next general election."<sup>15</sup>

The new Council held its first meeting on February 7. Power was re-elected as Chairman, receiving five out of a possible seven votes--the other two having voted for themselves. Harris had been the favourite choice of most councillors, but he declined because of business commitments.<sup>16</sup> Although this Council had a discernible political character, its members were unanimous in thinking that the city should have full incorporation and be put on a sound financial basis. Liberal supporters were Power, Harris, and the two appointees--T.J. Edens, who was reappointed, and R.A. McCoubrey--<sup>17</sup> while the Tories were O'Dea and Callanan. Keating was somewhat of an independent, committed to reducing the cost of municipal affairs.<sup>18</sup> While this meeting was in progress, the Council received a letter from the government requesting it to send a deputation immediately for a discussion on municipal affairs with the Executive. Issues discussed included a readjustment of

<sup>15</sup>P.T. McGrath interview in the Brooklyn Standard-Union, quoted in Evening Herald, March 14, 1896.

<sup>16</sup>Proceedings of the St. John's Municipal Council, February 7, 1896, as reported in Daily News, February 7, 1896.

<sup>17</sup>Appendix D.

<sup>18</sup>Evening Telegram, January 24, 1896.

the municipal debt, the possibility of granting full incorporation, and ways and means. The government intimated to the deputation--consisting of Harris, Edens, and McCoubrey-- that it would enact legislation in the forthcoming session regarding these issues.<sup>19</sup>

At subsequent meetings the Council took steps to minimize the cost of municipal services and appointed a Finance Committee to investigate the operations of its departments. This Committee reported on February 27 that the salaries of officials were far too high, considering the limited funds at Council's disposal. It recommended that salaries be reduced and some officials be dismissed.<sup>20</sup> In the preparation of its 1896 budget, Council estimated expenditures within revenues of approximately \$65,170, but told the government on June 30 that the annual interest charge could be paid only through increased taxation, in particular by additions to the sewerage rates and the coal duty. The Chairmap warned the government that the Council could not make any more reductions in its expenditures, other than the \$5,000 saved by salary reductions and dismissal of some officials.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup>Proceedings of the St. John's Municipal Council, February 7, 1896, as reported in Daily News, February 7, 1896.

<sup>20</sup>Proceedings of the St. John's Municipal Council, February 27, 1896, as reported in Evening Telegram, February 28, 1896.

<sup>21</sup>"Municipal Council Report," JHA, 1896, p. 407.

The Whiteway Government did not introduce any legislation during the 1896 session either to grant full incorporation or to improve Council's financial situation, although it had promised to do so.<sup>22</sup> Instead, it passed a bill returning to Council the sole control and management of the streets which had been taken from it under the 1892 Rebuilding Act. The Opposition criticized the government for not granting full incorporation, and suggested a commission be appointed to sit out of session and prepare a full incorporation bill for presentation at the 1897 session. Donald Morison blamed civic apathy for the large municipal debt which the government had created since the Fire, and said that if St. John's had full incorporation with direct taxation--including an annual rent on all property within city limits--the taxpayers would be more interested since they "would feel in their pockets the obligations of governing the city . . ."<sup>23</sup>

The government did not act on Morison's request for a commission, although Morris told the Assembly that the Executive had already decided on such a course of action. He said that the annual interest on the municipal debt should be paid, and that:

<sup>22</sup> Evening Herald, July 3, 1896.

<sup>23</sup> Morison in Assembly Debates, August 1, 1896, in Evening Telegram, August 13, 1896.

... with time and attention to the matter a more suitable measure than the present one could be formulated, whether an improved form of the present system of municipal government, or a full measure of incorporation he was not prepared to say.<sup>24</sup>

Morris did not strongly advocate full incorporation because the only request for it--besides the Municipal Council, whose attitude was that the taxpayers and not it should make the demand--<sup>25</sup> really came from the Opposition. Thus the government felt the matter was not urgent, and need not be dealt with until after the 1897 general election.

The Opposition tried to make the government's unwillingness to readjust the municipal debt a party issue in anticipation of the general election. In early 1897, the Evening Herald expressed the hope that

... the Municipal Council and the ratepayers should generally set on foot an agitation for the amendment of the city's charter, by giving it a full measure of incorporation and readjusting the debt so that the colony shall bear the proportion justly chargeable to it . . . .

The newspaper suggested on April 8 that the agitation be a non-partisan citizens' movement, promoted by "men not actively connected with party politics on either side."

<sup>24</sup> Morris in Assembly Debates, August 1, 1896, in Evening Telegram, August 15, 1896; and Evening Telegram, August 3, 1896.

<sup>25</sup> Harris in Legislative Council Debates, August 4, 1896, in Evening Telegram, August 19, 1896.

Government expenditures in St. John's since the 1892 Fire, the Evening Herald asserted, had increased the municipal debt by nearly \$1,000,000, but had benefited the colony as a whole as much as it did St. John's. The readjustment of this debt, it believed, should form the basis of the suggested agitation.<sup>26</sup>

Similarly, the Municipal Council pressed the government for a readjustment of the debt, and decided at its April 9 meeting to arrange a meeting with the government to discuss this possibility. Two Tory councillors, Callanan and O'Dea, threatened to resign if the government refused to reduce the debt.<sup>27</sup> The Evening Herald welcomed the government's decision to meet with the Council, and suggested that the latter hold a public meeting to discuss the government proposals.<sup>28</sup> The government told the Council that the debt was negotiable and a compromise would be made, but not during the current session, since the Revenue and Supply Bills had already been passed. Whiteway, furthermore, told the Council's delegation that he favoured giving the city a full charter of incorporation,<sup>29</sup>

<sup>26</sup>Evening Herald, January 29, April 8, 1897.

<sup>27</sup>Proceedings of the St. John's Municipal Council, April 9, 1897, as reported in Evening Herald, April 10, 1897.

<sup>28</sup>Evening Herald, April 12, 1897.

<sup>29</sup>Proceedings of the St. John's Municipal Council, April 15, 1897, as reported in Evening Herald, April 17, 1897.

a promise which would show the electorate that the government intended to give the citizens complete control over their municipal affairs.

With both parties agreeing that some readjustment of the civic debt was necessary, the issue became pushed into the background until after the general election. Instead, the major issue became the success of Whiteway's economic policies, which had won two consecutive elections for the Liberals, and on which he hoped to win another. Although the railway had been constructed, it had not brought the immediate economic diversification and improvement in the standard of living which Whiteway had been promising since 1882. The railway had provided much employment during its construction, but its completion in 1897 only meant more unemployment, thus aggravating an already depressed economy.<sup>30</sup> In St. John's, conditions were worsened by outport men seeking employment there.<sup>31</sup> Unlike the 1893 election, the government had far less funds for providing work for the many unemployed in the city.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>30</sup>Hiller, "A History," pp. 331-336.

<sup>31</sup>Evening Herald, April 14, May 22, 28, 1897.

<sup>32</sup>Hiller, "A History," p. 333; see also Morris's address to a large labour gathering organized by the Tories in front of the Colonial Building, September 16, 1897, in Evening Telegram, September 16, 1897.

The Opposition--which had been earnestly organizing since mid-March under Winter's leadership--<sup>33</sup> attempted to turn the large discontented labour vote to their advantage. In St. John's they ran a straight labour ticket, using the presidents of two large labour organizations, while the third was a fisherman. (See Table 6). In St. John's East, there was only one labour candidate, whereas the other two belonged to prominent city families which had traditionally championed the poorer classes for over half a century.<sup>34</sup> Even this tactic did not work, even though the Tory candidates came within approximately fifty and three hundred votes, respectively, of defeating their Liberal opponents, none of whom were working class candidates. Among those elected was Councillor Callanan in the West End who, in early September, had switched party allegiance.<sup>35</sup> Another municipal councillor, Thomas Keating, ran unsuccessfully as an independent in St. John's East, polling about half as many votes as each of the other candidates. The government was, however, defeated, having won only six of the thirty outport seats.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>33</sup>Evening Herald, March 13, 1897.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., September 29, October 2, 1897.

<sup>35</sup>Callanan to Morine, September 8, 1897, letter published in Evening Herald, September 9, 1897.

<sup>36</sup>Hiller, "A History," Appendix 2, Table IX, p. 372.

TABLE 6

## ST. JOHN'S EAST AND WEST ELECTION RESULTS, 1897

District	Candidates				Votes Polled
	Name	Political Affiliation	Religion	Occupation	
St. John's East	T.J. Murphy	Liberal	Roman Catholic	Lawyer	1,720
	J.P. Fox	Liberal	Roman Catholic	Accountant	1,973
	L.O'B., Furlong	Liberal	Roman Catholic	Commission merchant	1,577
	Edward Shea	Tory	Roman Catholic	Lawyer	1,531
	R.J. Parsons	Tory	Presbyterian?	Lawyer	1,478
	P.J. O'Neil	Tory	Roman Catholic	Tailor	1,401
St. John's West	T. Keating	Independent	Roman Catholic?	Publican	669
	E.P. Morris	Liberal	Roman Catholic	Lawyer	1,752
	J.C. Tessier	Liberal	Roman Catholic?	Merchant	1,610
	J.J. Callanan	Liberal	Roman Catholic	Grocer	1,588
	T.M. White	Tory	Roman Catholic	Mechanic	1,461
	Jacob Chafe	Tory	Roman Catholic?	Fisherman- planter	1,371
	C.W. Ryan	Tory	Roman Catholic	Grocer	1,418

Source: Evening Herald, September 29, October 18, 30, 1897.



The new Tory Government, under Premier Winter, assumed office determined to reduce unnecessary public expenditures and to "put the financial affairs of the colony on a better footing . . . ." <sup>37</sup>

Callanan's defection to the Liberals reduced the possibility of the Tories forming a majority on the Municipal Council, even with its two appointees, J.W. Foran and J.E. Furneaux, appointed in late November. <sup>38</sup> In fact, this left both parties with three members each--Keating being an Independent.

One of the economic measures the government proposed in the 1898 session was to relieve the colony of the financial burden of operating a railway. A bill was introduced turning over the railway to a Canadian entrepreneur, R.G. Reid. He was to operate it for a period of fifty years, and by the immediate payment of \$1,000,000 he could buy the railway at the end of the operating period. Besides receiving generous land grants throughout the island, the railway would be exempt from municipal taxation. Reid was also permitted to purchase the St. John's dry dock, operate a tramway, and construct a new railway terminus in the West End of St. John's. Moreover, Reid

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., pp. 337-339; Winter in Assembly Debates, March 26, 1898, in Evening Herald, April 5, 1898.

<sup>38</sup> Appendix D. Evening Herald, November 30, 1897.

was given a contract, to pave Water Street for \$140,000.<sup>39</sup> The provisions of this bill were drafted and passed without any consultation with the Municipal Council which had legal jurisdiction over some of the sections of the bill.<sup>40</sup>

The bill split the Liberal Party between Bond and Morris supporters.<sup>41</sup> The former opposed it because Reid would be given every asset Newfoundland had for a sum far below their actual cost, and because Reid would become a monopolist effectively controlling the colony's economy.<sup>42</sup> The latter supported the bill because it would relieve the colony of a strangling financial burden and would provide much needed employment, particularly in the West End.<sup>43</sup> Two Bond supporters, Horwood and Callanan, were the only members to strongly condemn the bill as it affected St.

<sup>39</sup> J.K. Hiller (ed.), The Newfoundland Railway Contract of 1898 (St. John's: Memorial University, 1973), pp. 8-13. For a discussion of the negotiations surrounding this Railway Contract, see Hiller, "A History," pp. 337-347.

<sup>40</sup> "Memorial of Liberal Opposition," enclosure in Murray to Chamberlain, March 2, 1898, in Correspondence relative to a Contract for the sale of the Government Railway, p. 22.

<sup>41</sup> Evening Herald, February 24, 1898. St. John's MHA's supporting Bond were T.J. Murphy, L. O'B. Furlong, and J.J. Callanan, while James P. Fox and James C. Tessier supported Morris.

<sup>42</sup> Hiller, "A History," p. 346.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 345.

John's, commenting that the Council should have been consulted first, and accusing the government of ignoring the rights of the people of the city to please a "railway magnate." Horwood claimed that the Council would never consent to the proposed paving contract without first having tenders called, because such an expenditure would only be added to an already large municipal debt. Callanan castigated the government for its proposal to give the Municipal Basin--certain land sections around the harbour in the West End which had been frequently used by the mechanics and farmers of the district--to the Reids for the construction of the railway terminus.<sup>44</sup>

The railway bill was passed only a few days after the publication of the auditors report on the municipal accounts for 1896. That report noted that Council's bookkeeping system was inadequate, and that several over-payments had been made without Council's knowledge.<sup>45</sup> The report confirmed the public's worst suspicions of municipal mismanagement, thus making it possible for the government later to abolish the Council without any significant opposition.

<sup>44</sup> Horwood and Callanan in Assembly Debates, February 24, 25, 1898, in Evening Herald, March 1, 2, 1898.

<sup>45</sup> "Auditors' Report for 1896," published in Evening Telegram, February 19, 1898.

Although the government had promised early in the session to introduce legislation concerning the Municipal Act and Debt, it never specifically defined what it would be.<sup>46</sup> The Municipal Council was most concerned about any legislation, in view of government press statements that the Council should be abolished<sup>47</sup> and the Colonial Secretary's known promotion during his editorship of the Daily News between 1894 and 1898<sup>48</sup> of the commission form of municipal government. The commission, which consisted of several citizens appointed either by the government or the rate-payers, was a system becoming increasingly popular in the United States among large businessmen who resented the control of municipal affairs by professional and ward politicians.<sup>49</sup> In its annual report to the government on March 4, Council told the government that any withdrawal of local government from St. John's would be a "step backward," and suggested, instead, a fully elective Council having a restrictive property franchise. It believed that this system would be "less susceptible to party or private influences than an appointed Commission

<sup>46</sup> Winter in Assembly Debates, February 9, 1898, in Evening Herald, February 15, 1898.

<sup>47</sup> For instance, Daily News, February 23, 1898.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., January 26, 1896.

<sup>49</sup> Hays, "The Politics of Reform in Municipal Government in the Progressive Era," pp. 141-159.

or Board [which] would be responsible only to the government, by whom they were elected. . . . Council also requested a debt readjustment on a more "equitable basis," and that its powers be increased to enable councillors to conduct city affairs "on a self-supporting and business-like basis."<sup>50</sup>

The government's official indication of its municipal policy was contained in the March 11 Budget Speech. The civic debt of over \$1,800,000 was to be reduced by charging over \$400,000 to the colonial debt. This represented the money, the government said, the Liberals spent illegally in the city after the 1892 Fire.<sup>51</sup>

Two weeks later Winter introduced legislation removing the seven present councillors from office, and substituting three members, who would be appointed and subject to removal by the Governor-in-Council. These new councillors not only would have the same powers as that of their predecessors, but would be in fact given additional authority to impose and collect any taxation deemed expedient, subject to the approval of the Governor-in-Council. The civic debt was adjusted at \$1,210,000, which represented the Council's share of the consolidated public debt on December

<sup>50</sup> "Municipal Council Report," published in Daily News, March 5, 1898.

<sup>51</sup> Evening Herald, March 12, 1898.

31, 1897, and was required to pay biennially 4 per cent interest. Besides this debt, the Council was also charged with the \$140,000 paving contract for Water Street. The government gave the Council permission to raise a loan of \$1,350,000 upon the city's credit for paying off the debt owed the colonial government.<sup>52</sup>

Winter said that the government made these changes because the municipal system, as set up in 1888, had broken down, and it believed the only remedy to this municipal malady was an "entire change in the constitution of the body." Having drafted the 1888 Act, Winter quite understandably defended the principle of the municipal system which he now proposed to abolish, emphasizing that it was "adopted finally as embodying the best form of government for the town of St. John's."

It was hoped that a mixed body would have been a satisfactory arrangement. I believe that the original principle, if carried out, would have worked satisfactorily. That was the combination of the element of self-government, the election of councillors by the people to represent them in matters of taxation, and the restraining, or conservative influence of Government through its appointees.

He blamed partisan politics and government interference as being responsible for the destruction of that system. The municipal finances were consequently in total disarray,

<sup>52</sup> 61 Victoria, Cap. 45, "Municipal (Amendment) Act, 1898." See also Appendix II.

resulting in the accumulation of a large municipal debt:

The Council, therefore, have only been raising a sufficient amount for the actual requirements of the town itself - its ordinary running expenses - but nothing whatever towards the interest on its public debt. The debt and interest has therefore been piling up year after year, and it has now reached a figure with which it is impossible to deal unless a large amount be wiped off and taken over by the colony.

Winter promised that the proposed change would not be permanent "if found to be unsuitable or a better arrangement can be made . . . ." He, however, believed that the change would work, and cited the case of Washington where a similar commission already existed, that city being "the best governed in the world . . . ." To ensure the independence of the new Council, the government would appoint as one of the three councillors an individual known to be politically opposed to it.<sup>53</sup>

This three member Council, the Receiver General, A.B. Morine said, would be a commission of enquiry into the financial administration of the city to find out

how taxation can best be raised, so as to leave enough money in the hands of whatever body may continue to govern this city as to pay the country the interest on the debt, which ought to be paid the city . . . . I don't think anyone would vote for this bill if it were to stand as a permanent bill . . . our proposal is for nothing more or less than one of enquiry, which we expect to report by the next session. We might have appointed a commission alone, and allowed the

<sup>53</sup> Winter in Assembly Debates, March 26, 1898, in Evening Herald, April 5, 1898.

present Council to go on, but the Commission would be reporting, not upon their own experience, but upon the experience of others, and such a report would have not been nearly so valuable as that of three men governing the city for the next year and finding from actual experience what is necessary to place the city under a good and effective Government . . . .

This 'Government' would be controlled by property owners, a privilege Morine claimed was denied them under the present system. He said that the principle of representative government was not suited to St. John's since

. . . here we have a large number of people compared to the number of property-owners. Here 90 out of 100 have to pay comparatively little taxes and the 10 are simply not represented because they are not in it when polling day comes .

He hoped that the commission would report "in such a manner that we shall find it possible to bring down a system of Government that will be representative and safeguard those that are taxed . . . ." <sup>54</sup>

All city MHA's supported the debt readjustment, but voiced their disapproval of the establishment of the three man commission, responsible only to the colonial government. Morris said that St. John's should have full incorporation, "free from the central government" while considering the government "most generous" with the debt. He asserted that the Liberal Government, and not the Council, had been responsible for the large debt accumulated

<sup>54</sup> Morine in Assembly Debates, March 26, 1898, in Evening Herald, April 5, 1898.



since 1892. Moreover, Morris said the Council had been unable to adequately carry on its municipal services because the Council was refused the proper powers of taxation by that government. He also blamed the Council's default of its annual interest payment on the Liberal Government's refusal to accede to Council's many suggestions for paying this interest. Morris, however, resigned himself to the bill's inevitable passage, and the deprivation of municipal democracy.<sup>55</sup> Morris, conscious of his delicate third party status in the Assembly, gave only token opposition to the bill, while simultaneously taking political broadsides at the Liberal Party of which his former colleague, Robert Bond, was now the undisputed leader.

Similarly, the St. John's Liberals also acknowledged that the Whitway Government had been responsible for much of the municipal debt. Callanan said that this government interference in addition to the destruction of the East End in the 1892 Fire, produced the dire financial situation of the municipality. He asserted that if the present Council were given adequate powers of taxation and collection, then the city would have no difficulty in meeting its annual interest. Callanan then moved a motion, seconded

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<sup>55</sup> Morris in Assembly Debates, March 26, 1898, in Evening Herald, April 5, 1898.

by Murphy, that the bill be given the six months' heist.<sup>56</sup>  
This motion was lost on division, with Morris and supporters voting for the motion.<sup>57</sup>

The Municipal Bill passed the Legislative Council without too much opposition. John Harris, a municipal councillor, opposed the proposed change, claiming that the government was more interested in removing the present councillors, than in correcting the "defects and imperfections" of the municipal system. Harris (evidently also speaking for the Municipal Council) said the debt adjustment was inadequate, and insisted that it should be approximately \$1,100,000. This debt would consist only of expenditures Council directly incurred and its unpaid interest since 1891. But it would not include what the Whiteway Government had spent under the 1892 Rebuilding Act. As far as the government was concerned with guarding the rights of property owners, he asked the government to accept Council's suggestion for a property franchise, "so that persons having the greatest interest in the community may have an opportunity of electing suitable members to represent their interests in the Council."<sup>58</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Callahan in Assembly Debates, March 26, 1898, in Evening Herald, April 5, 1898.

<sup>57</sup> Assembly Debates, March 26, 1898, in Evening Herald, April 5, 1898.

<sup>58</sup> Harris in Legislative Council Debates, March 29, 1898, in Daily News, April 15, 1898.

Four of the five elective councillors--Power, Harris, Callanan, and Keating--opposed their removal from office, and drafted a resolution protesting the government action. The other three councillors--O'Dea, Foran, and Furneaux--were government supporters and did not endorse it. The four objected because the commission would not be responsible to the taxpayers. They blamed interference from colonial governments for political purposes for any deterioration in the municipal system as created in 1888, and considered the 1898 Municipal Bill a "continuation of this condition of things." The dissident councillors appealed to citizens to agitate for the abolition of the "obnoxious Commission," and the granting of full incorporation.<sup>59</sup>

No public opposition developed to the removal of the councillors. Many citizens, disillusioned with the partisan politics of past Councils, welcomed the commission which would reduce the cost of managing municipal affairs.<sup>60</sup> In his Presentation to the Supreme Court the foreman of the Grand Jury hoped that "taxes will be reduced under the new arrangements."<sup>61</sup> Any public resentment that might have

<sup>59</sup> Proceedings of the St. John's Municipal Council, April 30, 1898, as reported in Daily News, May 2, 1898.

<sup>60</sup> Trade Review, February 1, 1902.

<sup>61</sup> Grand Jury Presentation, June 6, 1898, GN2/22, Petitions and Applications to the Colonial Secretary (located at the Newfoundland Archives).

developed--considering the past record of apathy in the city--would have been, however, subordinated to and even negated by the tremendous wave of frenzy and indignation which swept the island against 'Czar' Reid and the Railway Contract in late 1898 and finally built up to a crescendo in the 1900 general election.<sup>62</sup> The government's municipal policy was criticized as part of that whole contract, especially the sale of the Municipal Basin, the exemption from municipal taxation, and the paving contract. There was, then, no great uproar against the Council's abolition, but the Liberals later did charge that the Council was abolished to help expedite the government's negotiations with the Reids concerning the Railway Contract.<sup>63</sup>

Appointed to the Municipal Council were two prominent Tories, J.V. O'Dea and T.M. White, and the Government Engineer, H.C. Burchell.<sup>64</sup> The nature of these appointments clearly indicated that the government never intended to keep the Council out of partisan politics.

<sup>62</sup> See Miller, "A History," pp. 346-369; and Noel, Politics in Newfoundland, pp. 26-34, for an examination of the agitation against the 1898 Railway Contract, and its amendment in 1901.

<sup>63</sup> Callanan in Assembly Debates, July 14, 1899, in Evening Herald, August 3, 1899.

<sup>64</sup> Appendix D.

While O'Dea was a nominee of the mercantile community, White's appointment was a political gesture to the working class which had given the government substantial support in the late election. White was President of the Mechanics Society and an unsuccessful Tory candidate in St. John's West in the 1897 election. Burchell might have been appointed because the government wanted to be sure that the Council would carry out its wishes with the Reids concerning the transfer of the Municipal Basin to the Reids and the construction of the West End terminus.<sup>65</sup> This 'commission of government' lasted until 1902.

It did not solve most of the problems of the municipality, including the perplexing question of how to pay its yearly interest. The creditability of this particular system of municipal government was from the outset undermined both by its political nature, and by the political turmoil which surfaced in mid-1898 over the Railway Contract. Leadership for this public opposition was provided by Bond's Liberals, who promised to return to the citizens the right of self-government. In effect, the commission was not really given an opportunity to see if it were the most suitable form of local government for St. John's.

Petitions were signed throughout the island and presented to the Colonial Office requesting that the

<sup>65</sup>Letter to Evening Telegram, May 18, 1900.

Railway Act be disallowed. Despite 22,774 signatures by January, 1899, the Colonial Office refused to interfere. Public resentment was further intensified when the governor announced in November, 1898, that the Receiver General, A.B. Morine, had acted as Reid's solicitor during the drafting of the Railway Bill, and still held that position. Morine was forced to resign from the Cabinet by the Governor, but in doing so, left behind a government split between Winter and Morine supporters and which had been bound together only by an agreement between its two leaders. This agreement, which lasted until January, 1899, had consisted of Winter's resigning the Premiership at the end of the 1898 session in favour of Morine, and accepting the Chief Justiceship. Winter, however, did not resign because prominent Tories outside the government were averse to this proposal. A disgruntled Morine secured, in January 1899, the support of twelve government MHA's to enforce his agreement on Winter. The government was now divided, and the four political leaders--Winter, Morine, Bond, and Morris--bargained with each other for political support. Winter was unable to get Bond's support, while Morine failed in his negotiations with Morris. Thus, both leaders were forced to re-establish their political links in preparation of the opening of the session in May, with Winter agreeing to resign at the end of 1899 in Morine's

favour.<sup>66</sup>

The government introduced in the session legislation to further reduce the municipal debt from \$1,210,000 to \$1,000,000. This would enable the Council to pay its annual interest payment to the colonial government, which it could not previously do. The Council told the government, that under this debt adjustment, the interest could be paid by slight increased taxation, as an additional ten cents on imported coal into the city.<sup>67</sup>

Both the Bond and Morris St. John's MHA's supported this legislation and stated it was only "fair" the city was not charged with the large rebuilding expenditures made by the Whiteway Government after the 1892 Fire. Also, both political factions demanded that the government grant full incorporation, and criticized it for abolishing the elective councillors in 1898. Morris said that, although abolition had been a "retrograde movement," he had given the government the benefit of a doubt stating "perhaps the Government considered it necessary in order to settle this matter of payment of interest by the city . . . ."<sup>68</sup>

<sup>66</sup>The development of these political manoeuvrings follows from Miller, "A History," pp. 351-355.

<sup>67</sup>Budget Speech in Assembly Debates, July 11, 1899, in Evening Herald, July 13, 1899.

<sup>68</sup>Morris in Assembly Debates, July 14, 1899, in Evening Herald, August 3, 1899.

Callanan, a Bond supporter, claimed the abolition was necessary because the government "perhaps . . . thought that [it] and the Council would not work well together and that they would not assent to the giving away of the Municipal Basin, the Crown Lands, and the foreshore of the harbour over which they had control . . ." to the Reids.<sup>69</sup>

The second debt readjustment had been done to better enable the Council to meet its annual interest. It was also an attempt to secure political support for a Tory candidate in a by-election to be held in St. John's East in November, which was caused by the death of James P. Fox, earlier in the year. The Tories probably hoped that this readjustment would be popular with the electorate, since the Whiteway Liberals were responsible for this large civic debt, particularly during the 1892-1893 election campaign.<sup>70</sup>

The Reid Contract was the central issue of the by-election campaign, and a severe test of the government's popularity. Its candidate, Councillor White, campaigned on the economic prosperity being generated by the Reids, and on his background as a successful labour leader.<sup>71</sup> The Liberal candidate was John Dwyer, a farmer and

<sup>69</sup> Callanan in Assembly Debates, July 14, 1899, in Evening Herald; August 3, 1899.

<sup>70</sup> Evening Herald, July 25, 27, 1899.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., October 30, 31, November 8, 9, 1899.



relatively unknown to colonial politics. The Liberals argued there was plenty of unemployment in the city, but campaigned on the unpopularity of the Contract.<sup>72</sup> The Liberals easily won the election against a disunited government, and their victory only reinforced the public's disenchantment with the Reid Contract. The victory also strengthened the political influence and organization of the St. John's Liberal Association in the city's politics, especially in the East End. However, Dwyer's election was further helped by Morris's decision to abstain from any involvement in the campaign, thus making it a straight Liberal-Tory battle.

The St. John's Liberal Association revived the question of full incorporation in early 1900,<sup>73</sup> and convened a meeting in late February to discuss how this could be achieved. All speakers unanimously supported a completely elective system, and government interference, as exemplified in the Liberal action after 1892 and the Tory 1898 Commission, was condemned. A twelve man committee, consisting of leading Liberal and Morris supporters, was appointed to "make arrangements for a public meeting and to prepare a series of resolutions for adoption thereat."<sup>74</sup> The

<sup>72</sup> Evening Telegram, November 9, 1899.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., February 17, 1900.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., February 24, 1900. Committee members were Sir Robert Thorburn, W.R. Mowley, John Anderson, Louis E. Miller, Michael Rower, William Harris, Sr., Thomas Keating, John Curran, E.H. Davey, Michael Kennedy, John Carew, and James S. Kent.

committee never took any further action, probably because the Association was too preoccupied with the delicate political situation created by the defeat on February 19, of the Winter Government in the Assembly, by a coalition of Bond and Morris factions, with the aid of several Tory defectors. Bond was subsequently requested by the governor to form the government, which included Morris as an Executive Councillor. The new government never brought in any municipal legislation, but restricted itself to routine business.<sup>75</sup> Its first concern was the amendment of the 1898 Railway Contract, which the government decided to put before the electorate in an autumn general election.

The Liberal Party resoundingly won the general election with a substantial majority of thirty-two out of thirty-six seats.<sup>76</sup> In St. John's, they took all six seats, easily defeating their Reid opponents. (See Table 7). There were two notable features about the St. John's election campaign. First, the strength and organization of Bond's Liberal Association, which elected all three candidates for St. John's East, and one in the western district, John Anderson. Second, the Tories used as candidates, individuals closely identified with the city's labour organizations, hoping to take advantage of the

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<sup>75</sup>Hiller, "A History," pp. 356-357.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., Appendix 2, Table IX, p. 372.

TABLE 7

## ST. JOHN'S EAST AND WEST ELECTION RESULTS, 1900

District	Candidates				
	Name	Political Affiliation	Religion	Occupation	Votes Polled
St. John's East	John Dwyer	Liberal	Roman Catholic	Farmer	2,538
	L.O'B.Furlong	Liberal	Roman Catholic	Commission merchant	2,533
	T.J.Murphy	Liberal	Roman Catholic	Lawyer	2,501
	T.M.White	Tory	Roman Catholic	Mechanic	806
	J.F. Ryan	Tory	Roman Catholic	Planter	772
	R.J.Parsons	Tory	Presbyterian?	Lawyer	749
	J.J.Pittman	Independent	?	Lawyer	222
St. John's West	E.P.Morris	Liberal	Roman Catholic	Lawyer	2,317
	John Anderson	Liberal	Presbyterian	Merchant	2,096
	John Scott	Liberal	Roman Catholic	Mechanic	2,012
	S.G.Collier	Tory	Roman Catholic?	Wheelwright	1,059
	C.W.Ryan	Tory	Roman Catholic	Cooper	985
	J.J.Mullaly	Tory	Roman Catholic	Cooper	835

Source: Evening Herald, November 24, 1900.

large labour vote which benefited by the employment the Reids had generated. This tactic proved unsuccessful, as most labourers supported the Liberal Party because they were disenchanted with Reid's decision to shut down work in mid-1900 when the government threatened to amend the 1898 Contract.<sup>77</sup>

The Bond Government decided early in the 1901 session to bring in legislation for full incorporation of St. John's, and the city MHA's held several meetings in March to discuss its provisions.<sup>78</sup> The proposed legislation, however, was postponed until the next session, because the government could not decide how this would be done,<sup>79</sup> presumably because it was too preoccupied with amending the 1898 Railway Contract. The Liberal press blamed civic apathy for the continued existence of dirty cesspools, bad sewerage, short water supply, dirty streets, and the perennial deluge of complaints to the newspapers against these obnoxious inconveniences.<sup>80</sup> The Evening Telegram wanted the citizens to take some action to change the municipal system, commenting that St. John's was far behind other cities, such as Halifax, Saint John, and

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., pp. 361-363.

<sup>78</sup> Evening Telegram, March 20, 1901.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., July 25, 1901.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., February 4, 15, April 9, 1901.

Charlottetown in municipal management and improvements.<sup>81</sup>

The impetus for incorporation in 1902 chiefly came from the government, not the citizens. There was, however, a general public feeling that the 1898 Commission, which was proposed to reduce the cost of municipal government, did not satisfy the average citizen, who now believed that an elective council could do the work just as economically and efficiently.<sup>82</sup> The question of incorporation was thoroughly discussed at a prominent public debating club on January 23, with a large majority of those present favouring incorporation.<sup>83</sup> Furthermore, there was strong opinion in the community among the middle class, as expressed by one newspaper, that the proposed new Council be concerned with the "needs of the municipality and the welfare of property-holders," rather than being an "uncontrolled municipal machine with the wrong kind of men to accede to the demands for labour."<sup>84</sup>

The 1902 Municipal Bill had five main principles. First, the ward system was abolished, and the chairman and six councillors would be elected at large. Second, the voter qualifications would be a household franchise.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., February 4, March 20, 1901.

<sup>82</sup> Trade Review, February 1, 1902.

<sup>83</sup> Evening Herald, January 24, 1902.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., October 1, 1901.

Third, the chairman to be known, as the 'mayor' and elected on a special ticket. Fourth, the Council was given no new powers of increasing taxation. Fifth, the Southside, a community just outside the city, would be included with<sup>85</sup> in the city limits. Furthermore, the municipal debt was maintained at one million dollars, on which the Council was required, to pay 4 per cent annual interest. In addition, the Council still had to present its estimates of expenditures and revenues to the Legislature, which had the authority to disallow or alter any proposed increased taxation.<sup>86</sup> Morris, in introducing the bill, declared his only interest was to "serve the people and give them the best form of civic government as it was possible to obtain . . . He was not afraid of trusting the people in the matter of governing themselves . . ." He said that the present bill was not a complete charter of incorporation, giving the Council absolute control of its expenditures and taxation, because opinion was divided in the community on this issue. While there were many people favouring total independence, Morris noted, a more conservative element wanted a Council, such as the government proposed.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>85</sup> Morris in Assembly Debates, April 9, 1902, in Evening Telegram, May 5, 1902.

<sup>86</sup> Edward VII, Cap. 6, "St. John's Municipal Act, 1902."

<sup>87</sup> Morris in Assembly Debates, April 9, 1902, in Evening Telegram, May 5, 1902.

The bill's most contentious section was the abolition of the ward system, and the proposal for city-wide elections. The Premier stated that he and not Morris, was responsible for this change, the latter being personally opposed to it. Bond hoped the change would permit councillors "greater independence, and consequently greater power for good."

Imagine a man representing a small ward. His limited constituency rendered him subject to the control of the dominant sect or class who resided in that ward. What liberty would that man have in questions concerning the ward he represented, which was regarded with disfavor by the dominant sect or class in that ward? None whatever. But if that man could appeal to the larger constituency of the whole city, he could snap his fingers at the objections or opposition of any mere coterie, and discharge his duty fearlessly and aright. This it was that had moved certain cities in the United States to do away with the ward system. They recognized that they could thereby secure greater independence of action.

Although he never admitted it, Bond probably feared that under a ward system the Municipal Council might become controlled by supporters of Reid or Morris. Furthermore, Bond wanted to prevent the domination of the Council by cliques or political factions as during the 1890's. His speech indicated an extensive knowledge of municipal reform in other countries, particularly the United States, Canada, and Great Britain. In these countries, he said, reform seemed to "consist of either the two-chambered council or

<sup>88</sup> Bond in Assembly Debates, April 11, 1902, in Evening Telegram, May 30, 1902.

a council elected by the whole city . . . . " Bond described the present bill as a "compendium of such elements of good in vogue in Canada and the United States as would appear to meet the requirements of this city . . . ." <sup>89</sup> Bond effectively wanted the Council run by businessmen competently managing the city's financial matters. The old councils, he asserted, never had enough of these individuals to effect the necessary reform, because . . . the small number of business men . . . had not the power to exercise their financial ability and other powers for the benefit of the city because they were out voted by men who had not the same grasp of civic and money matters as these business men had . . . .

As in other countries, he believed that civic reform in St. John's consisted of securing a more economical administration, a lower rate of taxation, and greater efficiency in the public service. This reform consisted of securing men "who would appeal to a large constituency, . . . not to a purely pocket borough . . . ." <sup>90</sup>

The Opposition objected strongly to city-wide elections for three reasons. First, it meant political "bossism" would dominate municipal affairs, since "political organizations would put forward candidates." Morine particularly believed that Morris would use the Council:

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid. By a "two-chambered Council," Bond meant a Council with some representatives elected at large, while others would be elected in wards.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.



He knew the amount of good the hon. member did, but they could not deny that he would use all his skills to get his friends in. If he got them there they would help him, and if he didn't do this some less scrupulous man would seize the opportunity. Politics would enter in, and it could not but be admitted that that was undesirable. They did not want any politics in city affairs.

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Second, Morine claimed that the "dominant denomination would control the elections."

The Roman Catholic denomination was the dominant sect, and it was liberal in politics. . . . It was not what denomination the candidate belonged to, but what denomination elected him. If he was elected by a denomination not his own he was its servant, because he knew he owed his election to that denomination. . . . It was there the dominant strength of the denomination which elected him.

He wanted the principle of proportional denomination representation in the House of Assembly also applied to the municipal system. Hence, divide the city so that

. . . the Protestants can if they like have some representatives in the council so that if at any time the question of sectarianism should arise the Protestants should be able to get into the council by their own right and not by the liberality of the majority. Let them not have it so that the Roman Catholics could return them all. He thought that was only fair and just. . . . He asked that the House protect the Protestants in the city as they protected the Roman Catholics in the colony. They were entitled to representation.<sup>92</sup>

Morris dismissed Morine's charge of sectarianism, commenting that the latter, when he had no other argument to use

<sup>91</sup> Morine in Assembly Debates, April 11, 1902, in Evening Telegram, May 10, 12, 1902.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

in a debate, always fell back upon "his last plank . . . sectarianism."<sup>93</sup> Other government members noted that the Catholic majority had elected non-Catholics in the past, on the basis of the individual merits of the candidate and not his denomination.<sup>94</sup> Third, Morine said the abolition of the ward system would place the citizens at a disadvantage, since they would not know which councillor to turn to for the remedying of complaints. Each councillor, because he represented the whole city and not just one particular section, could easily shirk his responsibility by telling the citizen to see another. Moreover, Morine believed that without the ward system it would be very difficult to get businessmen as councillors:

. . . better . . . to have one man for each ward who should alone be responsible for his ward. . . Then every man in the ward would know what representative to go to see upon any business connected with his ward. . . If we had one man for each ward, he would be responsible for that ward, and his interests would be the interests of that ward. His neighbours would all know him . . . Many a business man in town would undertake the duties of a ward, that would not for a moment think of assuming these duties if the districts were not divided . . .

He warned, that under the proposed change, only those "who would have nothing else to do, glad of a little honor,

<sup>93</sup> Morris in Assembly Debates, April 9, 1902, in Evening Telegram, May 6, 1902.

<sup>94</sup> See for instance, Bond and Anderson in Assembly Debates, April 11, 1902, in Evening Telegram, May 13, 1902; and Morris in Assembly Debates, April 9, 1902, in Evening Telegram, May 5, 1902.

salary and influence they might get from their own political party later on . . . <sup>95</sup> would run as candidates.

The election under this Act was held on June 19. There were only two candidates for the mayoralty, George Shea and T.M. White. The former was a member of a leading family long associated with city and colonial politics, and a large property owner and businessman. He was considered neutral in colonial politics, having disassociated himself from it for two years.<sup>96</sup> White, unlike his opponent, had some previous municipal experience, had been an unsuccessful Tory candidate in three consecutive colonial elections, and thus was well-known to most of the city electors. He was also closely identified with the Reid interests, and was secretly receiving \$1,000 yearly from the Reids for having resigned his position as sub-sheriff in 1900 to contest St. John's West on their behalf.<sup>97</sup> Although both candidates promised "clean, efficient" civic government, the mayoralty race was a contest between a business and labour candidacy, because Shea was supported by the "best off classes," while White depended on the labour vote.<sup>98</sup>

<sup>95</sup> Morine in Assembly Debates, April 11, 1902, in Evening Telegram, May 12, 1902.

<sup>96</sup> Free Press (St. John's), quoted in Evening Telegram, May 21, 1902.

<sup>97</sup> Evening Telegram, December 22, 1905.

<sup>98</sup> Trade Review, May 17, 1902.

Eleven candidates ran for the six available councillor positions. (See Table 8). Six of these ran together on the same ticket, with the one manifesto. This 'Big Six' were prominent Liberals and included two former councillors, Power and Harris, while the other four had not been involved in active politics before. They promised to form an "energetic, united Council," which, they said, the city needed to cope with its problems of improving services while preventing unnecessary expenditures.<sup>99</sup> The other candidates consisted of a city MHA--John Anderson (St. John's West); two former candidates from the 1896 election; and two relative newcomers to St. John's politics. Similarly, they also pledged themselves to restraint and honesty in municipal finances, and to improving existing services. Several of them publicly opposed the 'Big Six', claiming that it was an attempt to secure "election without opposition and to establish ring rule."<sup>100</sup> Significantly, the Liberal Evening Telegram supported the 'Big Six'.

Shea closely beat White 1543 to 1303 for a majority of 240. The latter evidently received substantial support

<sup>99</sup> Evening Telegram, May 15, 1902. The six candidates were Michael Power, W.J. Ellis, Honourable John Harris, Frank D. Lilly, Samuel Milley, and John R. Bennett.

<sup>100</sup> See C.F. Muir's requisition in Evening Telegram, May 17, 1902; and John Anderson to Daily News, May 17, 1902.

TABLE 8

## ST. JOHN'S 1902 MUNICIPAL ELECTION RESULTS

Municipal Office	Candidates				
	Name	Political Affiliation	Religion	Occupation	Votes Polled
Mayor	George Shea	Independent	Roman Catholic	Merchant	1,543
	Thomas M. White	Tory	Roman Catholic	Mechanic	1,303
Councillor	F.D. Lilly	Liberal	?	Lawyer	1,103
	Michael Tobin	?	Roman Catholic	Publican	861
	C.F. Muir	Liberal	Roman Catholic	Stone-cutter	1,770
	Michael Kennedy	?	Roman Catholic	Contractor	1,265
	J.R. Bennett	Liberal	Anglican	Manufacturer	1,853
	Michael Power	Liberal	Roman Catholic	Master cooper	887
	John Anderson	Liberal	Presbyterian	Merchant	1,545
	W.J. Ellis	?	?	Contractor	1,848
	John Harris	Liberal	Roman Catholic	Merchant	1,560
	John Carew	?	?	Undertaker	1,192
Samuel Milley	?	?	Merchant	1,112	

Source: Evening Telegram, June 9, 21, 23, 1902.

from labourers discontented with working conditions,<sup>101</sup> and quite willing to support a working class candidate. While many middle class and property owners did not want Shea,<sup>102</sup> they voted for him because they never wanted White. Election of councillors was, however, based on personalities. Only three of the 'Big Six' were elected-- J.R. Bennett, W.J. Ellis, and J. Harris. The nature of the electoral support for candidates generally represented the significance of regionalism within the city, and also the part played by personalities. Bennett received support throughout the city, but was particularly strong on the Southside, where his wife came from. Three other candidates were elected on the basis of a solid vote in certain largely populated sections of the city--Harris in the East End, C.F. Muir in the central part of the city, and John Anderson in the West End.<sup>103</sup> It is particularly significant that Michael Power, once a prominent figure in the municipal politics of the 1890's, polled very badly, perhaps indicating that his earlier successes were due to his strength being concentrated in one small section which encompassed what had been ward four.

<sup>101</sup> Trade Review, April 19, 1902.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., May 17, 1902.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., June 28, 1902.

The Whiteaway Government had postponed in both 1896 and 1897 any improvement of the municipal system and finances, amidst increasing Opposition demands that St. John's be given full incorporation and a restrictive property franchise. Confident of re-election in November, 1897, the government delayed any decision on a change in the municipal system until after the election. One probable reason for this procrastination was the government's reluctance to readjust the municipal debt, which partially consisted of the large expenditures it had made after the 1892 Fire. The Liberals were defeated, however, and replaced by a Tory Party which passed railway legislation in 1898 that it hoped would be an economic panacea for the island. The Tories also approached municipal affairs in a businesslike manner, removing the seven councillors and substituting three appointees who would, the government promised, serve as a "commission of enquiry" into municipal affairs, and attempt to find a way so that the Council would be able to pay its annual interest. The government also reduced the municipal debt by including the expenditures the Liberals had spent illegally after the 1892 Fire in the public debt. Although the government had promised that the commission would include politicians from both parties, the nature of their appointments suggest that it never really intended to do so, and the councillors were removed from

office, as the Liberals charged, because the government wanted to be certain the Council would not oppose the Railway Contract as it affected the city. Morris did not strenuously object to the commission, claiming later that he had been willing to accept the change since the government considered it necessary to make a thorough investigation of municipal finances.

The opposition that developed to the Railway Contract in late 1898 and the political divisions in the Winter Government after that date up to its defeat in the Assembly in 1900, pushed the municipal issue into the background, as politicians and citizens in general were more concerned with amending the Contract, which became the central issue in a general election of that year. During the 1901 session, the Bond Government was too preoccupied with the Contract to deal with municipal affairs and, furthermore, was uncertain as to what it should do.

Finally, in the 1902 session the government introduced a bill providing for an all-elective Council, but not for full incorporation. The bill was designed to prevent the election of ward politicians, as under previous Councils, who generally were more concerned with their own particular wards than with the City as a whole. While most candidates in the 1902 municipal election were associated with colonial politics, it was hoped by both citizens and the government that under this system the Council would simply restrict



itself to administering the city and not become involved in partisan colonial politics--an unlikely possibility for city politicians.

This thesis has examined the incorporation of St. John's in 1888, and the Municipal Council and its relations with the colonial government for the period 1888-1902. One significant feature of the period was the close identification of colonial politics with municipal affairs and municipal politics. With many leading citizens reluctant to take an active part in municipal affairs, aspirants for municipal office generally came from the same small social group as their colonial counterparts. This meant that the rivalries in colonial politics among competing factions of the St. John's elite were also reflected at the municipal level. Probably the most prominent figure in municipal politics was Edward P. Morris, who while a member of the colonial legislature, used the Municipal Council and its patronage politically for the advantage of his supporters. But Morris alone did not politicize the Council. Instead, it had been born in a sea of politics during legislative debate on the incorporation bill in 1888, and immediately after when the Tories controlled five of the seven positions on the first Council. The right of the colonial government to appoint two councillors became de facto a recognition that the Council was, in effect, another appendage of

government. Another feature of the municipal system was Council's inability to dispose sufficient revenue to provide services to citizens and to pay the interest on its debt which was created under incorporation and by government expenditures for rebuilding after the fire of 1892.

Both citizens and the government regarded the 1902 Municipal Act as a remedial measure putting the Council on a non-partisan and economically sound basis. While the Council managed to pay its interest after 1901,<sup>104</sup> Council continued to be handicapped by inadequate revenue, and municipal affairs dominated by colonial politicians. Moreover, the central government still is responsible for the maintenance and administration of justice, public health and welfare—services which in most cities are paid for and controlled by the municipality. The Council is also required to present its annual estimates of revenue and expenditure to the government and is required by law to have a balanced budget. It can only over-expend and float bonds with governmental authority.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Newfoundland Royal Commission 1933 Report (London: H.M.S.O. cmd. 4880, 1933), p. 215. Council did not default on its interest payments again until 1932, when the government annexed some of the Council's sources of revenues in its attempt to find additional funds to pay off its large floating debt.

<sup>105</sup> Prowse, "Local Government," pp. 82-84; Crosbie, "Local Government in Newfoundland," pp. 336-338.

The failure of the central government to grant full incorporation in 1888 and in subsequent years, along with the general partisan political nature of the St. John's Municipal Councils, might have been a significant impediment to the development of local government in the rest of Newfoundland. Had the city's municipal democracy not been marred by government interference, it is very conceivable that municipal institutions might have come earlier. Instead, the city was only given limited political freedom, and the colonial government still remained the senior level of government of affairs in the city--a situation which still exists today.

APPENDIX

## APPENDIX A

TABLE 1

## ST. JOHN'S: POPULATION AND DENOMINATION, 1874-1901

Census Year	St. John's East		St. John's West		St. John's Population and Denomination								
	Population	As % of Nfld. Population	Population	As % of Nfld. Population	Populations of East and West Ends	A*	B*	C*	D*	E*	F*	G*	
1874	17,811	11.0	12,763	7.9	East End	13,624	2,829	8,135	1,274	443	322	1	-
					West End	10,866	1,829	7,564	1,086	272	115	-	-
1884	22,183	11.2	15,962	8.1	East End	16,727	3,825	10,083	1,786	685	316	32	-
					West End	14,415	2,520	9,313	2,034	363	183	2	-
1891	20,776	10.3	15,251	7.5	East End	13,446	3,454	7,194	1,931	570	249	7	41
					West End	11,377	1,796	7,098	2,074	237	96	1	75
1901	21,512	9.7	18,483	8.4	East End	14,245	3,615	7,162	2,398	614	273	70	113
					West End	14,303	2,468	8,025	2,999	322	114	47	328

\*A - Church of England; B - Roman Catholics; C - Methodist; D - Presbyterian; E - Congregationalist; F - Baptist and others; G - Salvation Army.

Source: Census of Newfoundland, 1874, 1884, 1891, 1901.

## APPENDIX A

TABLE 2

ST. JOHN'S: RATIO OF DENOMINATION TO POPULATION, 1874-1901

Census Year	Populations of East and West Ends		As % of St. John's Population	Ratio of Denomination to Population						
				Church of England	Roman Catholic	Methodist	Presbyterian	Congregationalist	Baptist & Others	Salvation Army
1874	East End	13,024	54.5	21.7	62.6	9.6	3.4	2.5	0.2	-
	West End	10,866	45.5	16.8	69.6	10.0	2.5	1.1	-	-
1884	East End	16,727	53.7	22.8	60.3	10.7	4.2	1.9	0.2	-
	West End	14,415	46.3	17.5	64.6	14.1	2.5	1.3	-	-
1891	East End	13,446	54.2	25.7	53.5	14.4	4.2	1.9	0.1	.3
	West End	11,377	45.8	15.8	62.4	18.2	2.1	0.8	0.0	0.7
1901	East End	14,245	49.9	25.4	50.3	16.8	4.3	1.9	0.5	0.8
	West End	14,303	51.1	17.3	56.1	21.0	2.3	0.8	0.3	2.3

Source: Census of Newfoundland, 1874, 1884, 1891, 1901.

## APPENDIX B

## ST. JOHN'S: OCCUPATIONS, 1874-1901

Occupation	1874		1884		1891		1901	
	East End	West End	East End	West End	East End	West End	East End	West End
Lawyers	(	(	32	5	37	5	42	10
Doctors	16	3	12	3	16	1	23	3
Clergymen	19	3	23	6	25	9	25	11
Merchants & Traders	147	33	218	46	106	96	196	47
Farmers	161	236	214	262	159	195	119	79
Mechanics & Handicrafts	706	622	1215	1074	-	-	-	-
Mechanics	-	-	-	-	954	835	953	1106
Able-bodied seamen engaged as fisher- men in the colony	446	370	-	-	-	-	-	-
engaged in catching and curing fish	329	800	432	837	131	279	-	-
Office & shop workers	-	-	545	279	742	328	544	559
Civil Servants	-	-	-	-	225	43	217	101
Factories	-	-	-	-	-	-	31	268
Miscellaneous	-	-	1138	948	1537	1492	1839	2184

Source: Census of Newfoundland, 1874, 1884, 1891, 1901.

## APPENDIX C

MEMBERSHIP OF THE 1888 MUNICIPAL BILL COMMITTEE,  
Formed to Draft Resolution for a St. John's Incorporation  
Bill

ANGEL, James (1838-1918): born in Halifax, Nova Scotia; Methodist; proprietor, James Angel & Co. (boiler and engine works); which was sold to the Reid Newfoundland Company 1898; West End resident; president, Home Industries Society, 1887; president of the Citizens Temperance Association 1893; appointed Legislative Council 1889.

AYRE, John B. (1805-1915): Methodist; baker and confectioner; MHA Bay de Verde 1894-1897; appointed Legislative Council 1898; unsuccessful candidate in Ward 3 in the 1888 St. John's municipal election.

CAMPBELL, Colin (1854-1917): Methodist, lumber and hardware merchant.

CLAPP, G.: ?

CLIFT, Shannon: ship broker and general commission merchant.

COOK, W.: Anglican; butcher.

DOYLE, F.J.: Roman Catholic; instructor to masters' mates; secretary of the Total Abstinence and Benefit Society 1880-89.

DUDER, John E.: Methodist; merchant; member of the Chamber of Commerce 1885; director Commercial Bank 1885-88.

DUGGAN, H.: Roman Catholic.

GERAN, L.T. (182?-1900): Roman Catholic; president St. John's Steam Laundry Company; West End resident; Secretary, Land Tenure Movement, 1885; secretary St. Vincent de Paul Society 1888; member of the Total Abstinence Society; MHA St. John's West 1889-93; unsuccessful candidate in Ward 5 in the 1888 St. John's municipal election.



GOODFELLOW, James (1830-1898): born in Tranent, Scotland; Presbyterian; merchant; prominent member of the Chamber of Commerce and secretary 1889; director Commercial Bank 1881-88; president General Water Company 1887-88; government representative and Municipal Council chairman 1888-90; municipal councillor Ward 3 1892-96.

HADDON, John: Methodist, land surveyor.

HALLERAN, J. (1843-18??): born in Halifax, Nova Scotia; Roman Catholic; builder; executive committee member; Home Industries Society 1888; vice-president St. John's Mechanics Society 1888.

HARRIS, W.: Roman Catholic; builder.

HENDERSON, John: Protestant; commission merchant.

JOY, Captain J.G.: Roman Catholic (?); master mariner.

KENT, R.J. (18??-1893): Roman Catholic; lawyer; East End resident; president Benevolent Irish Society 1888; MHA St. John's East 1873-86.

KICKHAM, Charles (1821-1894): Roman Catholic; builder; founder and president St. John's Total Abstinence and Benefit Society 1858-64; chairman, The Evening Daily Colonist Publishing Company 1890; prominent member of the Anti-Confederate League in St. John's East 1888-89.

MARCH: N.: Methodist; merchant.

MILLER, L.: Mineral water manufacturer; treasurer Home Industries Society.

O'REILLY, J.J.: Roman Catholic; merchant; West End resident; treasurer West End Anti-Confederation League 1888; chairman of charity for the Benevolent Irish Society 1888.

OUTERBRIDGE, Joseph: Anglican; general merchant.

ST. JOHN, F. (1852-1893): Roman Catholic; baker; East-End resident; vice-president St. Vincent de Paul Society 1887-88; prominent member of the Anti-Confederate League in St. John's East 1888-89; municipal councillor 1888-92; unsuccessful Thornburn government candidate for St. John's East in the 1889 general election.

SCORE, J.: contractor and builder.

SOUTHCOTT, John T.: born in St. John's; Anglican; architect and builder; unsuccessful candidate in Ward 2 in the 1888 St. John's municipal election.

SPRY, T.W.: Methodist (?); real estate and insurance agent.

TESSIER, P.G.: general merchant.

WOODS, John: Methodist; commission merchant.

Source: Daily Colonist, January 20, 1888; Night and Company's Director for St. John's, Harbour Grace and Carbonear, 1890. R. Hills (compiler) (Toronto: 1890); Henry Y. Mott, Newfoundland Men: A Collection of Biographical Sketches (1894).

## APPENDIX D

## ST. JOHN'S MUNICIPAL COUNCILLORS, 1888-1902

- Bennett, Edward W. (1857-1898): born St. John's; Anglican; educated at the General Protestant Academy in St. John's; west end brewer; councillor, 1892-1894, 1895-1896.
- Bradshaw, H.F.: government municipal appointee, 1900-1902.
- Burchell, Herbert C. (1855-?): born Sydney, Nova Scotia; Newfoundland Government Engineer, 1884-1905; Manager of the Newfoundland Government Telegraphs, 1893-1898; Manager of the Newfoundland railways, 1897-1898; Chairman, Municipal Council, 1898-1902; left Newfoundland for British Honduras to become Director of Public Works, June 21, 1906.
- Callanan, James J. (1842-1900): born St. John's; engaged in the cooperage trade until 1877, when he started a provisions and grocery business; President, St. John's Mechanics Society, 1876-1892; MHA, St. John's West, 1882-1889, 1897-1900; government municipal appointee, 1894-1895; councillor, ward five, 1896-1898.
- Carnell, John T. (1845-1893): born St. John's; Anglican; carriage builder; councillor, ward one, 1888-1893.
- Cousens, N.: government municipal appointee, 1894.
- Edens, Thomas J. (1861-?): born St. John's; Roman Catholic; educated in private schools at St. John's and at St. Mary's College, Montreal; grocer; one of the founders, along with E.P. Morris, of the Academia Club, a social and debating club organized in the 1880's; government municipal appointee, 1892-1894, 1895-1896.
- Foran, John W. (1841-1898): commission merchant; government municipal appointee, 1897-1898.
- Fox, James P. (1860-1899): born St. John's; educated at St. John's and at St. Mary's College, Montreal; accountant, Walter Grieve and Company, 1876-1882; Manager, James Fox and Sons, 1882-?; Director of the General Water Company, 1887-1888; government municipal appointee, 1888-1890; member of the Legislative Council 1890; MHA, St. John's East, 1890-1894, 1897-1899.

Furneaux, John: proprietor of the Evening Mercury (changed to Evening Herald in 1890), 1882-?; government municipal appointee, 1897-1898.

Goodfellow, James (1830-1898): born Tranent, Scotland; Presbyterian; merchant; member of the Chamber of Commerce and Secretary, 1889; Director, Commercial Bank, 1881-1888; President, General Water Company, 1887-1888; government municipal appointee and Chairman, 1888-1890; councillor, ward three, 1892-1896.

Greene, M.K.: government municipal appointee, 1896-1897.

Harris, John (1860-1915): born St. John's; Roman Catholic; merchant; was a prominent member of the Academia Club, along with E.P. Morris and T.J. Edens; government municipal appointee, 1890-1892; councillor, ward one, 1894-1898; member of the Legislative Council, 1892-1915, and its President, 1909-1915.

Keating, Thomas: Roman Catholic?; publican; councillor, ward one, 1896-1898.

Knowling, George (1841-?)?; merchant, government municipal appointee, 1890-1892.

McCoubrey, R.A.: Anglican; merchant; government municipal appointee, 1896-1898.

Mitchell, Thomas: Roman Catholic; baker; President, Land Tenure Movement, 1885; President, Home Industries Society, 1888; Chairman of Schools; Benevolent Irish Society, 1888; government municipal appointee, 1892-1893, 1894-1895.

Monroe, Moses (1842-1895): Presbyterian; merchant; major shareholder in several local manufacturing industries; member of the Legislative Council, 1884-1893; councillor, ward three, 1888-1892.

Morison, Donald (1857-?): born St. John's; Presbyterian; lawyer; MHA, Bonavista, 1888-1897; councillor, ward five, 1892-1896; prominent temperance leader.

Morison, William D. (1842-1892): Presbyterian; grocer, councillor, ward five, 1888-1892; prominent in temperance movement.

O'Dea, John V. (1868-1958): born St. John's; Roman Catholic; commission merchant; councillor, ward three, 1896-1898; government municipal appointee, 1898-1900.

O'Driscoll, P.C.: Roman Catholic; auctioneer and commission merchant; government municipal appointee, 1899-1900.

Power, Michael (1942-1928?): born St. John's; Roman Catholic; master cooper; President of the West End Anti-Confederate League, 1888; councillor, ward four, 1888-1898, and Council Chairman, 1890-1892, 1895-1898.

St. John, Frank (1852-1893): Roman Catholic; baker; Vice-President, St. Vincent de Paul Society, 1887-1888; councillor, ward two, 1888-1892.

Southcott, John T., Jr. (1853-?): born St. John's; Anglican; architect and builder; councillor, ward two, 1892-1896.

White, Thomas M.: Roman Catholic; President, St. John's Mechanics Society, 1895-1901; government municipal appointee, 1898-1899; unsuccessful Tory in the 1897 and 1900 general elections in St. John's West and East respectively, and in an 1899 by-election in St. John's East; unsuccessful candidate in the 1902 mayoralty election.

Source: Mosdell, When was That?; Mott, Newfoundland Men.

## APPENDIX E

## STATEMENT OF CIVIC DEBT UPON INCORPORATION IN 1888

Purchase of Water Company Stock	- \$ 385,000
Repayment of money by General Water Company to Savings Bank	37,200
Repayment of accumulated overdraft at Board of Works upon road, sewerage, sanitary, and other public works	- 55,000
Funds to enable the General Water Company to wind up business	- 10,000
Bannerman and Victoria Parks	- 10,000
Preliminary operating expenses for the Municipal Council	- 10,000
Towards the cost of a sewerage system, and to repay \$7,601.43 already advanced for that purpose	- 100,000
	<hr/>
	\$ 607,200
	<hr/>

Source: 51 Victoria, Cap. 5.

## APPENDIX F

## MUNICIPAL FINANCES, 1888-1902

Year January 1- December 31	Revenue	Expenditure	Civic Debt
1888	-	\$ 11,542.68	\$ 607,000.00
1889	\$ 69,242.20	96,730.40	?
1890	92,179.98	99,603.87	631,254.98
1891	100,142.75	82,834.73	781,953.58
1892	65,242.77	100,584.01	787,367.60
1893	68,056.41	107,027.47	1,131,405.39
1894	71,614.10	114,495.81	1,160,684.60
1895	71,952.04	68,506.84	1,657,793.75
1896	69,374.21	65,607.16	?
1897	74,038.99	73,210.35	1,854,142.33
1898	Not available	Not available	1,350,000.00
1899	92,885.58	88,377.06	1,000,000.00
1900	110,314.32	105,626.00	1,000,000.00
1901	111,176.77	109,419.37	1,000,000.00

Source: Blue Books, 1888-1901 (located in Newfoundland Archives); "Municipal Council Annual Reports," JHA, 1889-1898; "Select Committee Report on Council accounts for 1890," printed in Daily Colonist, May 8, 1891.

## APPENDIX G

## MEMBERSHIP OF THE 1892 FIRE RELIEF COMMITTEE

- Burchell, H.C.: Government Engineer.
- Fawcett, Morris: Inspector, Newfoundland Constabulary.
- Howe, James: Merchant; Congregationalist (?).
- Little, Joseph I.: Chief Justice; Roman Catholic.
- McCowen, J.R.: Superintendent, H.M. Penitentiary.
- Marshall, Alexander: Merchant; Methodist; Liberal.
- Mitchell, Thomas: Chairman, Municipal Council; Roman Catholic.
- Morris, Edward P.: Executive Councillor; Roman Catholic.
- Outerbridge, Joseph: Merchant; Anglican; Liberal.
- Pitts, James: Merchant; Legislative Councillor; Tory.
- Rendell, G.T.: Merchant; Legislative Councillor; Methodist; Tory.
- Rogerson, James J.: Merchant; Legislative Councillor.
- Sclater, James B.: Merchant; Liberal.
- Sheer, Edward D.: Merchant; President, Legislative Council.
- Tessier, C.W.H.: Merchant.
- Thorburn, Sir Robert: Merchant; Presbyterian; Tory.
- Walsh, William P.: Merchant; Roman Catholic; Tory.
- Woods, H.J.B.: Surveyor General; Methodist.
- Whiteway, Sir W.V.: Premier; Anglican.



## APPENDIX H

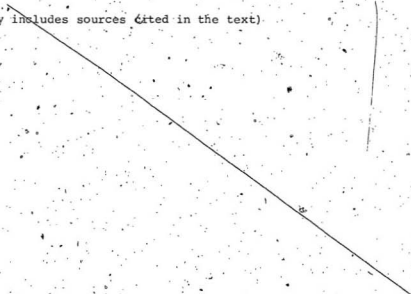
## STATEMENT OF MUNICIPAL DEBT ON DECEMBER 31, 1897

St. John's Rebuilding Act (old)	- \$	33,727.54
St. John's Rebuilding Act, 1892	-	381,878.00
1863 Sewerage Act	-	69,230.96
1888 Municipal Act	-	607,000.00
1890 Municipal Act and expenditure on Riverhead Wharf in West End, 1890	-	151,135.06
		<hr/>
		\$ 1,242,971.56
Unpaid interest owed by the Council since 1891 to the colonial government	-	200,329.34
Expenditures made by Whiteway Government after 1892 Fire, and paid for by warrant	-	410,841.43
		<hr/>
		\$ 1,854,142.33
To this debt add expenditure for paving Water Street under Reid Contract	-	140,142.33
		<hr/>
		\$ 1,994,142.33
Deduct illegal fire expenditures, and arrears of interest	-	644,142.33
		<hr/>
Net debt of	-	<u>\$ 1,350,000.00</u>

Source: Evening Telegram, March 28, 1898.

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    - (i) Incoming Correspondence, Letters and Petitions, 1888, GN2/2.
    - (ii) Minutes of the Executive Council, 1888, 1892, GN9/1.
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